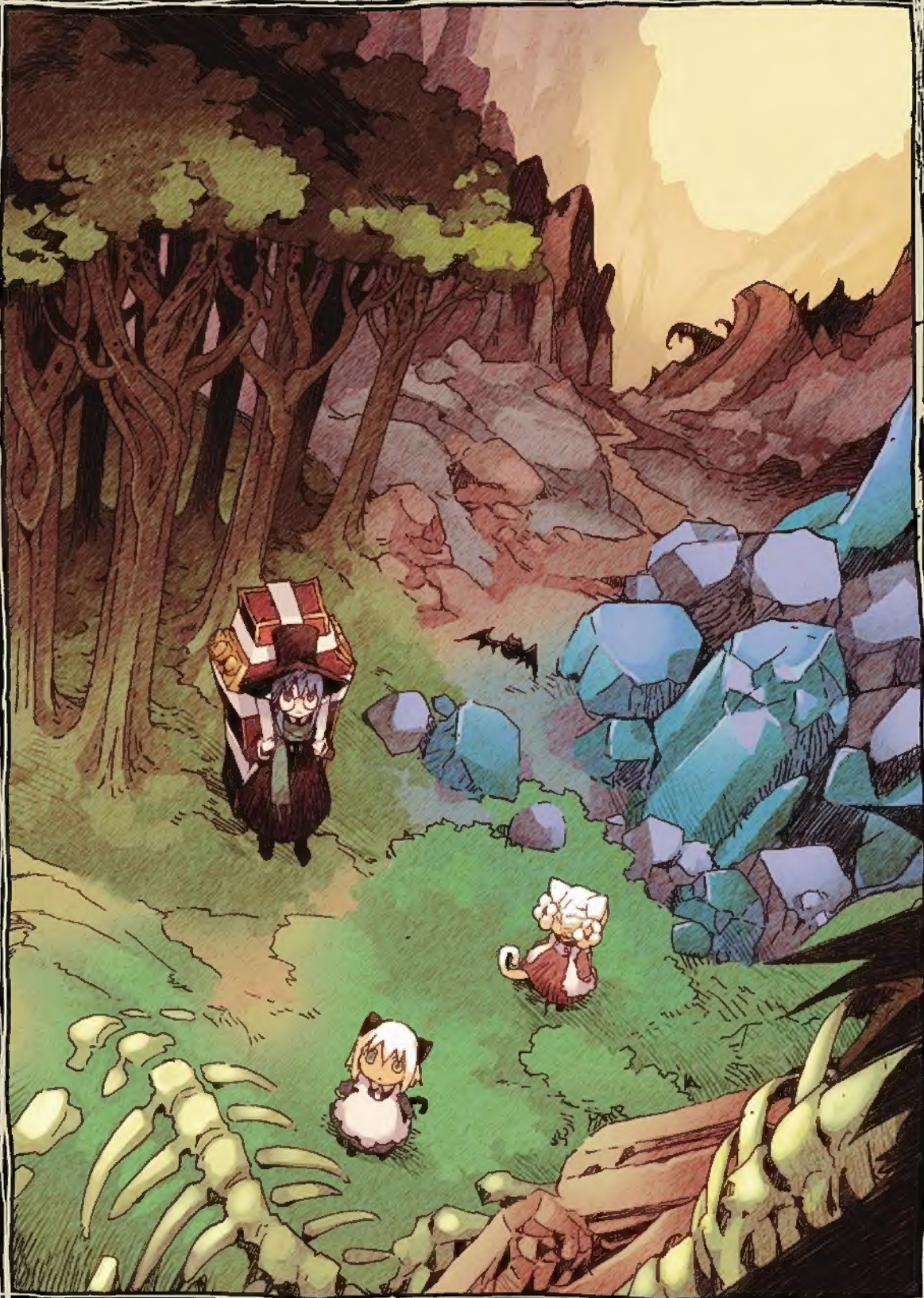




SHOULDER-A-COFFIN
KURO
5

SATOKO KIYUDUKI



Through confused conversation, Kuro and company finally realized that each of them was looking at something different in the valley.

Characters

Shoulder-a-Coffin Kuro





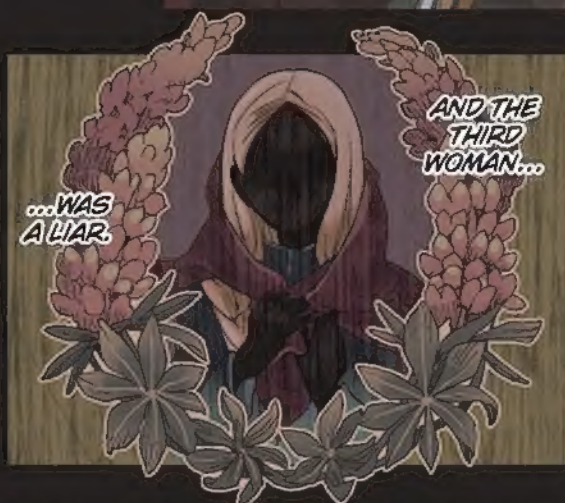
*What are witches made of?
What kinds of things are witches made of?*

*Look in the cauldron.
You see, there are three ingredients simmering.*

SHOULDER-A-COFFIN KURO

...ABOUT
THREE
WOMEN.

THIS IS A
STORY...



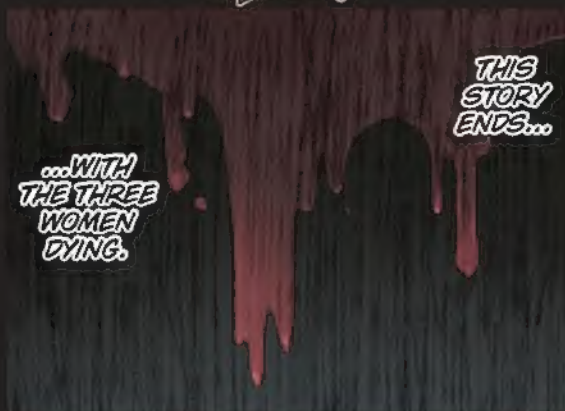
...WAS
A LIAR.

AND THE
THIRD
WOMAN...



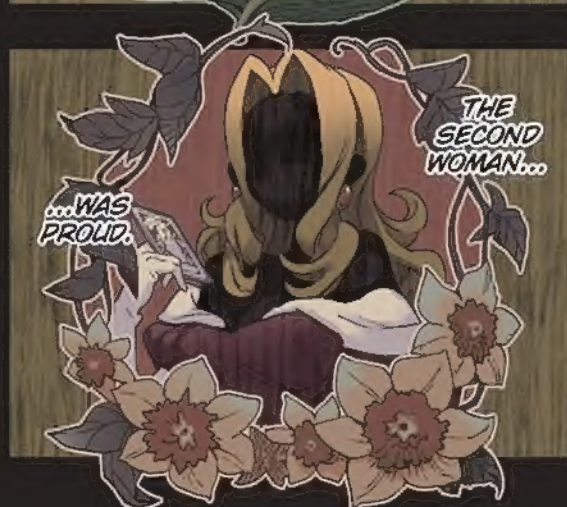
...WAS
SOLITARY.

THE
FIRST
WOMAN...



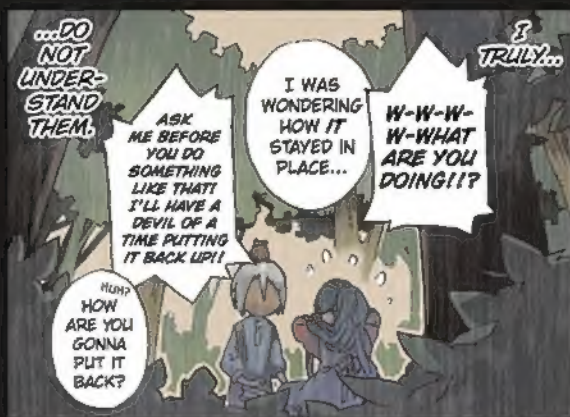
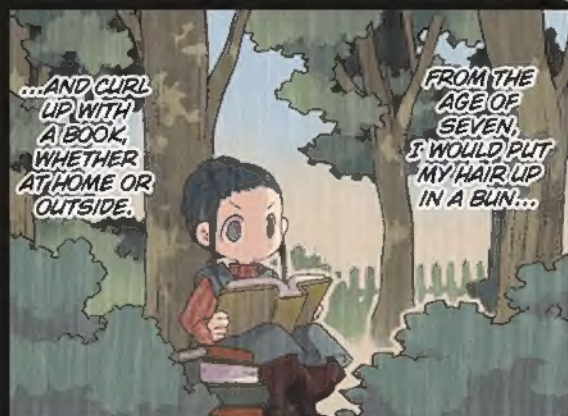
...WITH
THE THREE
WOMEN
DYING.

THIS
STORY
ENDS...



...WAS
PROUD.

THE
SECOND
WOMAN...





I NEED TO
FIND A NEW
JOB TO
REINVIGORATE
MYSELF.

EVER SINCE
THEN, MY
HEAD HAS
BEEN HEAVY,
AND I FEEL
NAUSEATED.



EARLY ON,
I GAVE
UP ON
BECOMING A
BRIDE AND
DECIDED
TO HAVE
A CAREER
INSTEAD.

EVEN AFTER
BECOMING
AN ADULT, I
WAS POOR
IN SOCIAL
SITUATIONS.



THANKS!

AH...
I'LL
TAKE
ONE.



...IN A
SMALL
COUNTRY
VILLAGE.

I BEGAN
AS A
TEACHER...

GOOD
MORNING,
EVERY-
ONE.

GO
AHEAD
AND TAKE
YOUR...



COUGH

COUGH



EMPTY

...
SEATS
...



WHEN
DID HE
BECOME SO
FAMOUS...?

SO
HE'S A
SCHOLAR,
IS HE?



THAT
DIDN'T
LAST FOR
LONG!

I DIDN'T
EXPECT
THIS...

ALL
OF THEM
REJECT
SCHOOL?



IS THIS ENOUGH MONEY?

PLEASE TAKE ME TO THIS ADDRESS.



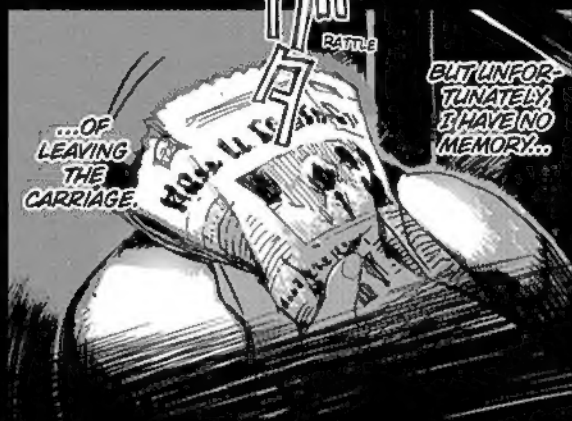
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I HONESTLY THOUGHT I COULD BE CURED.

I ACTED WITHOUT GIVING IT MUCH THOUGHT.



...ALL ALONE.

I WAS JUST TERRIFIED OF HAVING IT END THIS WAY...



...OF LEAVING THE CARRIAGE.

BUT UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVE NO MEMORY...



YOUR ROOM IS THIS WAY.

THE RESULTS OF YOUR EXAMINATION WILL BE READY IN THREE DAYS.



ANOTHER EMPTY ROOM...

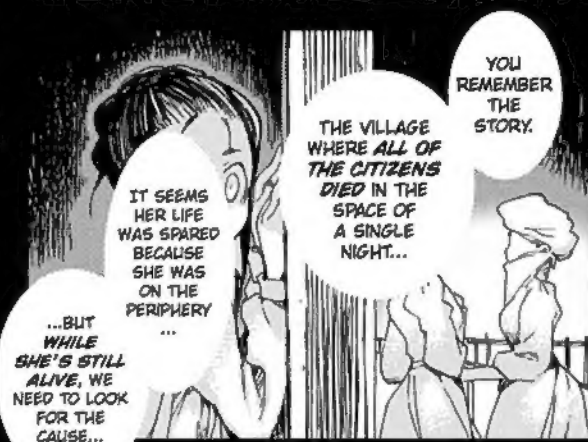
PERHAPS THIS IS MY FATE...



I WONDER WHY WE WERE SUDDENLY ORDERED TO CLEAR THE ROOM...

SHH!

APPARENTLY, SHE WORKED AT THAT VILLAGE FOR A SPELL...



YOU REMEMBER THE STORY.

THE VILLAGE WHERE ALL OF THE CITIZENS DIED IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE NIGHT...

IT SEEMS HER LIFE WAS SPARED BECAUSE SHE WAS ON THE PERIPHERY ...

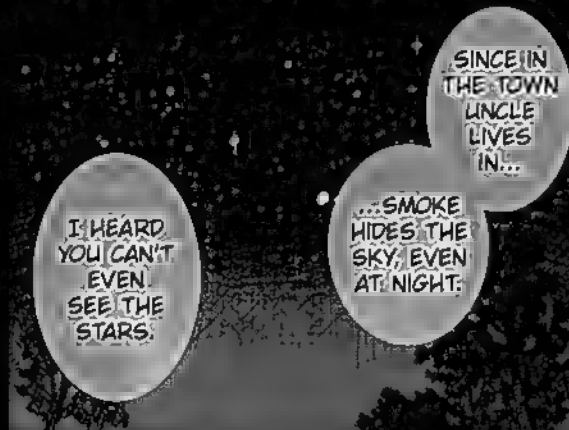
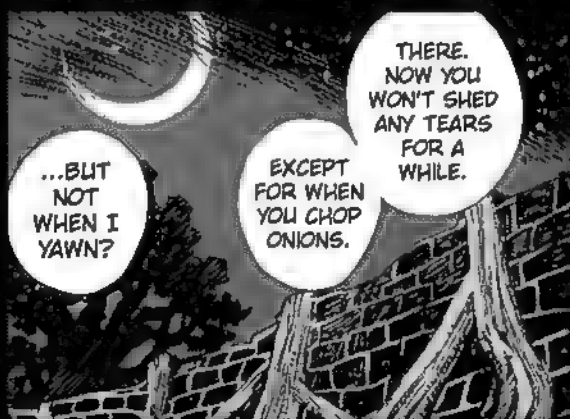
...BUT WHILE SHE'S STILL ALIVE, WE NEED TO LOOK FOR THE CAUSE...

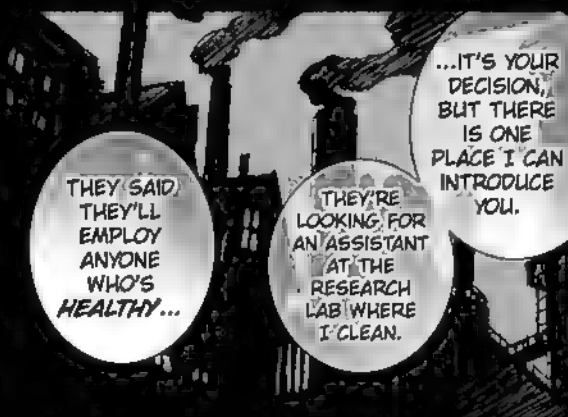


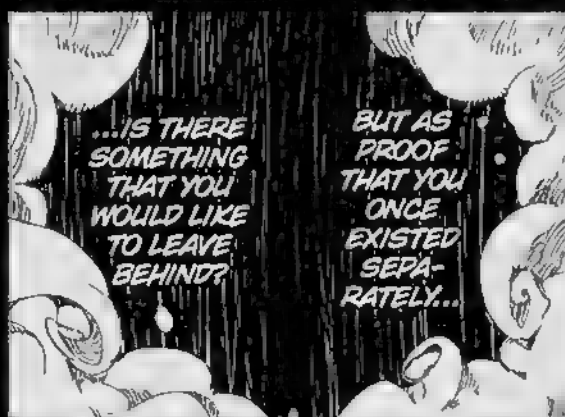
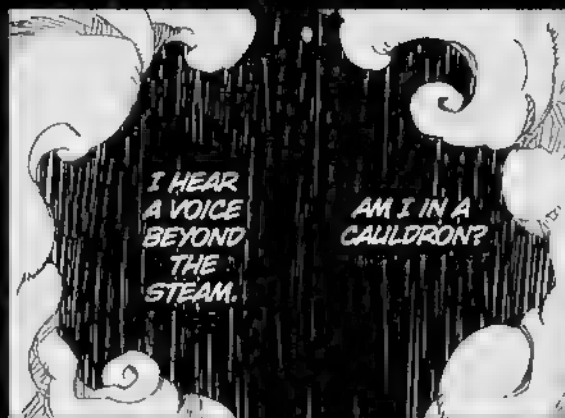


















*If you go to various places, you'll meet various people.
If you come across travelers like these, something may change,
or you may just feel that something has changed.*



BUT
PROMISE
ME.

YES.

SO
GOOD
NIGHT.

I MAY
VERY
WELL FIND
THEM
TOMOR-
ROW.



DID YOU
TAKE YOUR
MEDICINE?

AFTER
DINNER.

THEN
JUST
BEFORE
I GO TO
BED.



...FIND
THE
FAIRIES,
WON'T
YOU?

YOU
DEFINITELY
WILL...



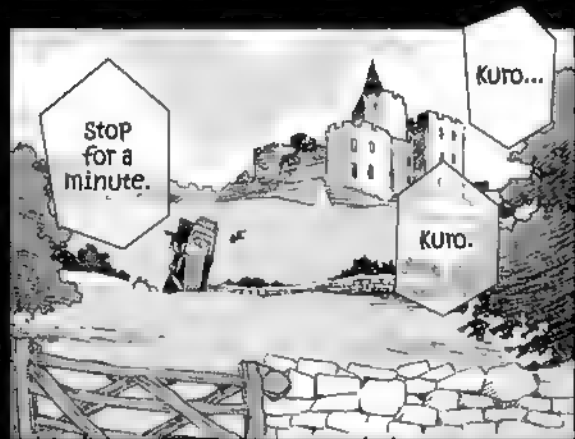
NO.
BUT...

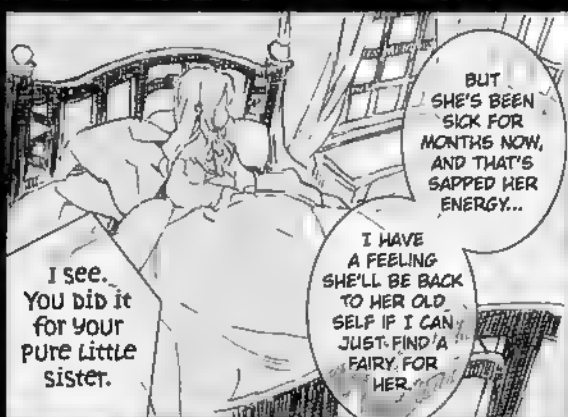
...I SAW
FOOTPRINTS
GOING ROUND
AND ROUND
IN THE EMPTY
FIELD.

THAT
ASIDE,
BROTHER
...

...DID
YOU FIND
THEM
TODAY?



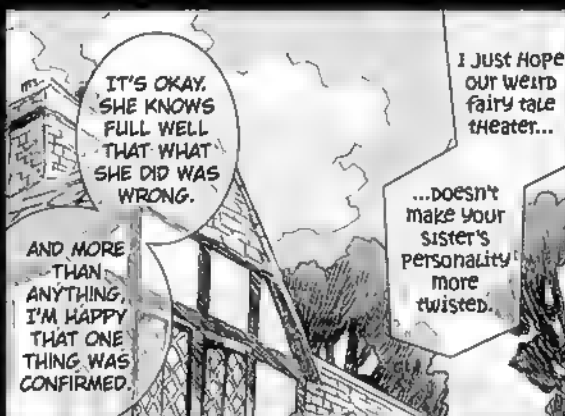
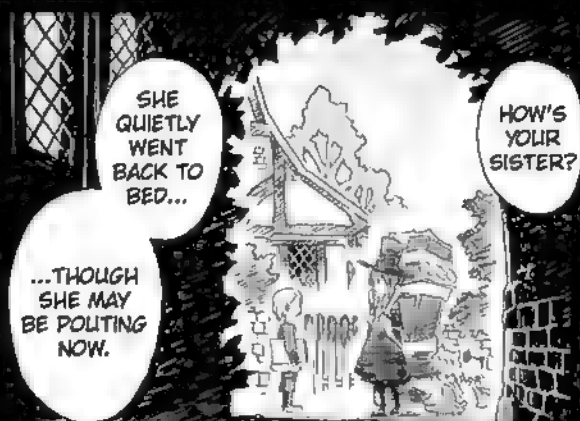










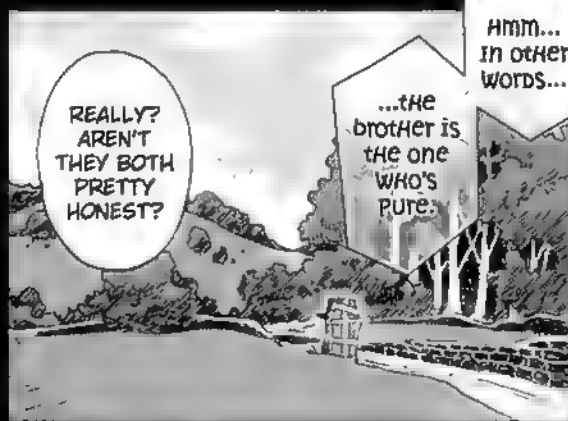




BUT THAT WAS CLEARLY A BITE MARK...

SOMEONE SAVED ME.

ALTHOUGH IT HAPPENED TOO FAST TO REALLY SEE...



REALLY? AREN'T THEY BOTH PRETTY HONEST?

...THE BROTHER IS THE ONE WHO'S PURE.

HMM... IN OTHER WORDS...



I BET WHO-EVER IT WAS...

...THEREBY STEERING US TO THE SIBLINGS.

MM?

...PURPOSELY SNUCK INTO THE COFFIN...

...AND ARRANGED FOR THE BOY TO CATCH YOU, SEN...



WHAT THEY SHARED WAS THE FEELING FOR FAIRIES.

ON THE BROTHER'S SIDE OF THE SCALE, FAIRIES OUTWEIGH HIS SISTER.

ON HER SIDE OF THE SCALE, HER BROTHER OUTWEIGHS FAIRIES.

AT SOME POINT, THE SCALE JUST TILTED DIFFERENTLY FOR THEM.



OF COURSE NOT. IT WAS ALL JUST...

DON'T TELL ME...

NO WAY...



BUT FOR BEING DITZY, NIJUKU...

...YOU CERTAINLY ROSE TO THE OCCASION WHEN YOU SENSED DANGER.

I MEAN BITING HER LIKE THAT.



...A FAIRY TALE THAT WAS INCREDIBLY CLOSE TO A COINCIDENCE.



WHAT?

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

BITE?



You two really are weird.

I KNOW, I SHOULDN'T TALK...

SUCCESS! SUCCESS!

DO YOU UNDERSTOOD THAT EXPLANATION?

I DID IT!



AND NEXT...

...IN YOUR HEAD, SPIN AROUND.

IT FEELS LIKE STICKING TO THE UNDERSIDE OF AN EDGE.



...IT'S STILL ALWAYS US.

...WHATEVER WE'RE MIXED WITH...

OUR GOOD POINT IS THAT...



...SO ALL KINDS OF THINGS ARE MIXED INSIDE OF US.

THE DOCTOR TOLD US...

...THAT WE WERE A GOOD MIX...



...I KNOW WHAT THE "FIRST INGREDIENT" WAS...

...I HAVE A FEELING...

...IN THE "GOOD MIX."



...THAT WE FORGOT MOST OF THEM!

BUT THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS...

IS THAT SO?



ALL KINDS OF THINGS!

THAT'S RIGHT!

I don't really get it...

...but you mean you can turn into other things?



BUT...

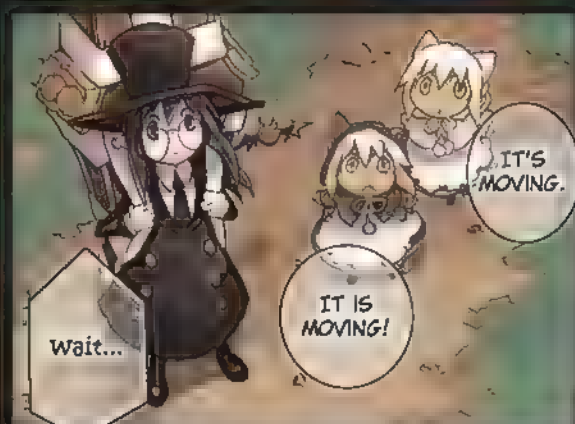
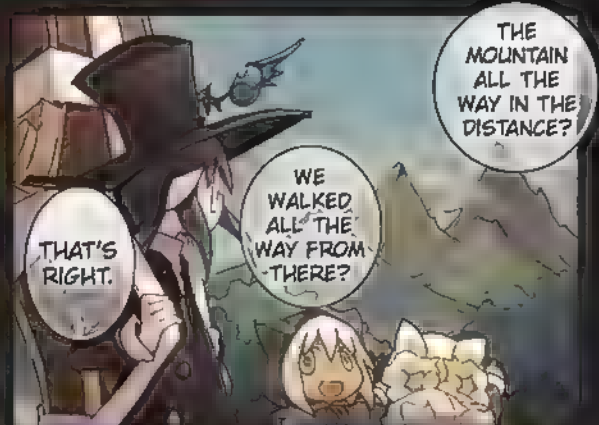
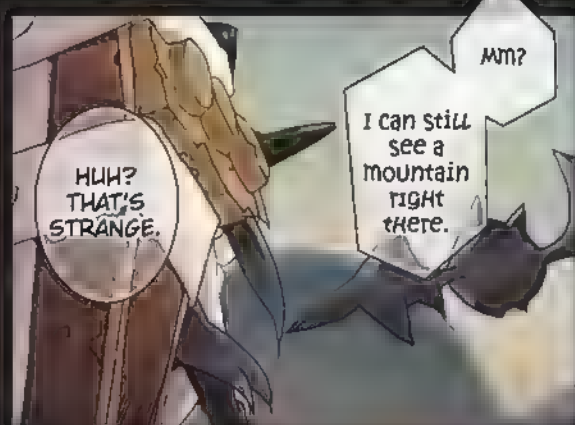
AH...

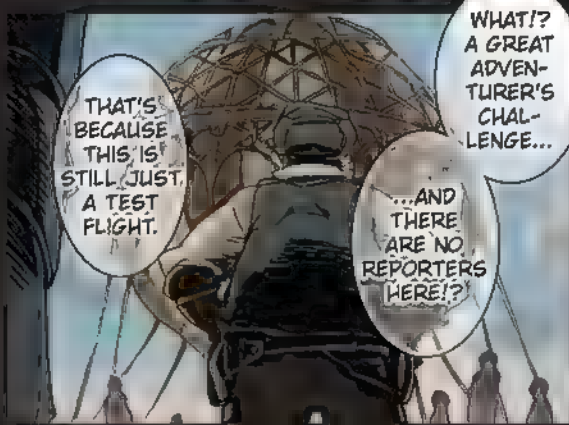


NO, IT'S MOSTLY OVER MY HEAD...

...Kuro, are you getting all this?

OR IS IT GOING IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER?

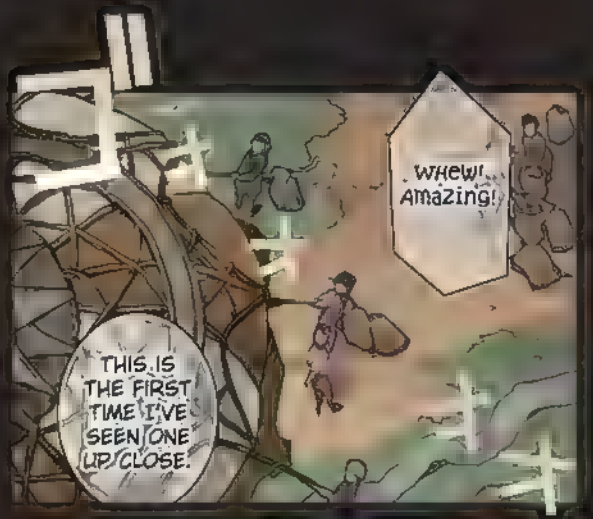




THAT'S BECAUSE THIS IS STILL JUST A TEST FLIGHT.

WHAT!?! A GREAT ADVENTURER'S CHALLENGE...

...AND THERE ARE NO REPORTERS HERE!?!



Whew! Amazing!

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN ONE UP CLOSE.

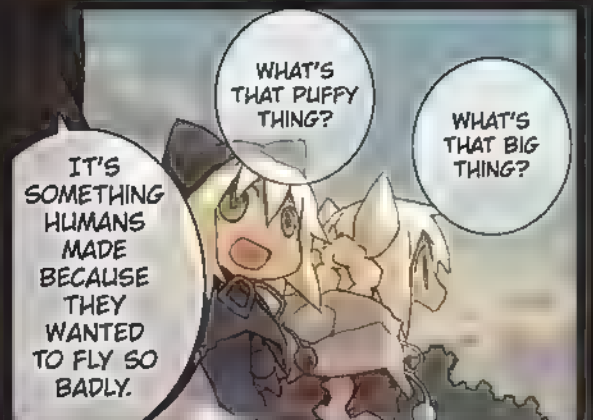


HUFF
HUFF

BESIDES, PEOPLE HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THAT LAST ACCIDENT YET.

WHAT, NOW I'M A DANGEROUS MADMAN?

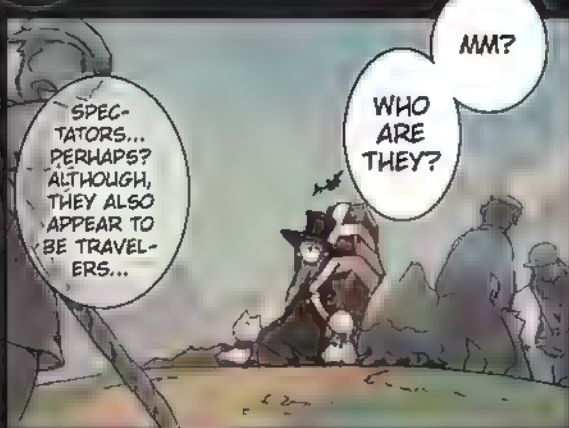
THESE PEOPLE HAVE NO SENSE OF ADVENTURE.



WHAT'S THAT PUFFY THING?

WHAT'S THAT BIG THING?

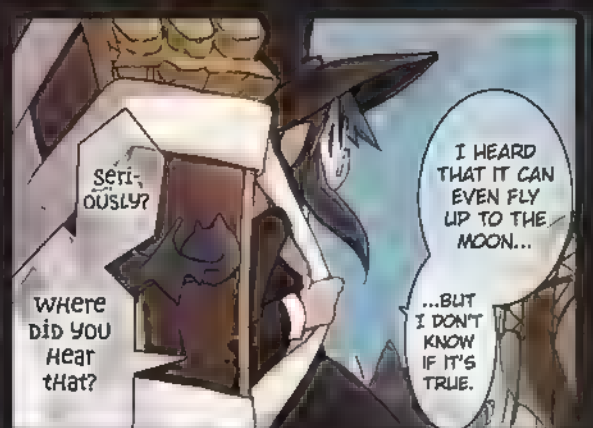
IT'S SOMETHING HUMANS MADE BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO FLY SO BADLY.



MM?

WHO ARE THEY?

SPEC-TATORS... PERHAPS? ALTHOUGH, THEY ALSO APPEAR TO BE TRAVELERS...

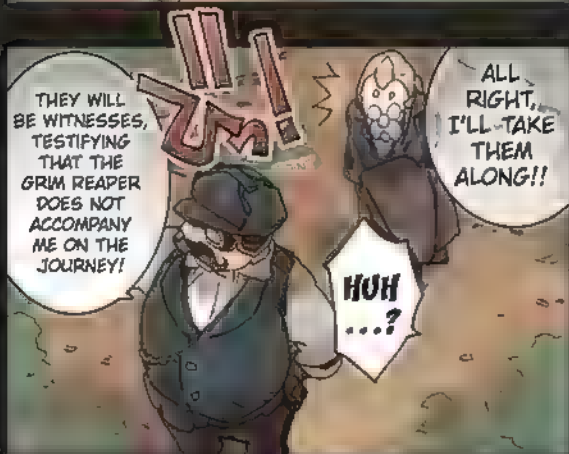


Seri-
ously?

Where did you hear that?

I HEARD THAT IT CAN EVEN FLY UP TO THE MOON...

...BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S TRUE.



THEY WILL BE WITNESSES, TESTIFYING THAT THE GRIM REAPER DOES NOT ACCOMPANY ME ON THE JOURNEY!

HUH ...?

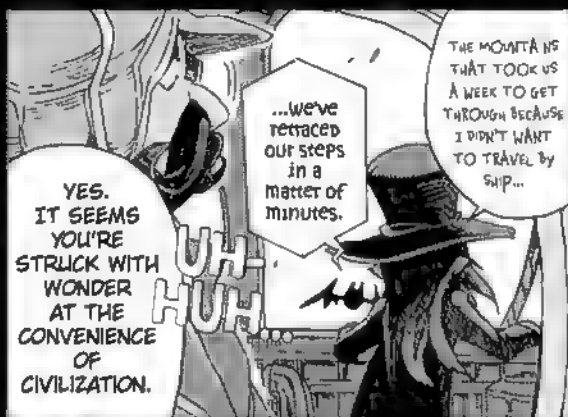
ALL RIGHT, I'LL TAKE THEM ALONG!!



THAT'S RIGHT, ABOUT THE BOASTFUL ECCENTRIC ...

OR WAS SOMEBODY GOSSIPING ABOUT IT?

MAYBE I READ IT IN SOME NEWSPAPER, IN SMALL PRINT...







YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE SOMETHING INTERESTING.

OH, NEVER MIND.

IT'S BECOME QUIET OUT THERE. YOU SHOULD GO OUT.



SHE'S GOT AN OLD-FASHIONED STEAM BALLOON.

WAS IT WISE TO RELEASE ALL THAT SMOKE?

IT'S EXTREMELY DIFFICULT EVEN TO PIERCE THE CLOUDS.



ALL RIGHT, I'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE THAT OUT.

COLD PROTECTION...

AH, BUT IT'S COLD OUTSIDE, SO PUT SOMETHING ELSE ON.



THE OLD-FASHIONED HOT-AIR BALLOON FLOATS ON STEAM POWER ALONE...

OLD-FASHIONED? WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?

...BUT THIS IS A COMPOSITE BALLOON THAT ALSO USES STEAM BUT MAINLY RELIES ON A BUOYANT GAS.



YES, WELL...

THAT'S YOUR ANTI-FREEZING OUTFIT?



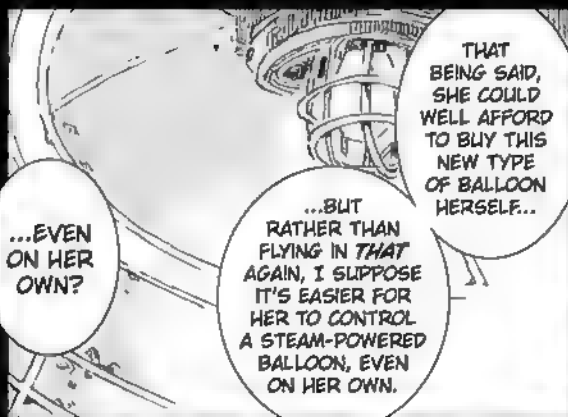
AS YOU SEE, IT'S STEADY ENOUGH TO ENJOY THIS GOURMET MEAL.

IT COSTS A LOT OF MONEY, BUT I CAN FLY WITH STABILITY, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE WIND.



DON'T TELL ME WE'VE FLOWN TO THE MOON...

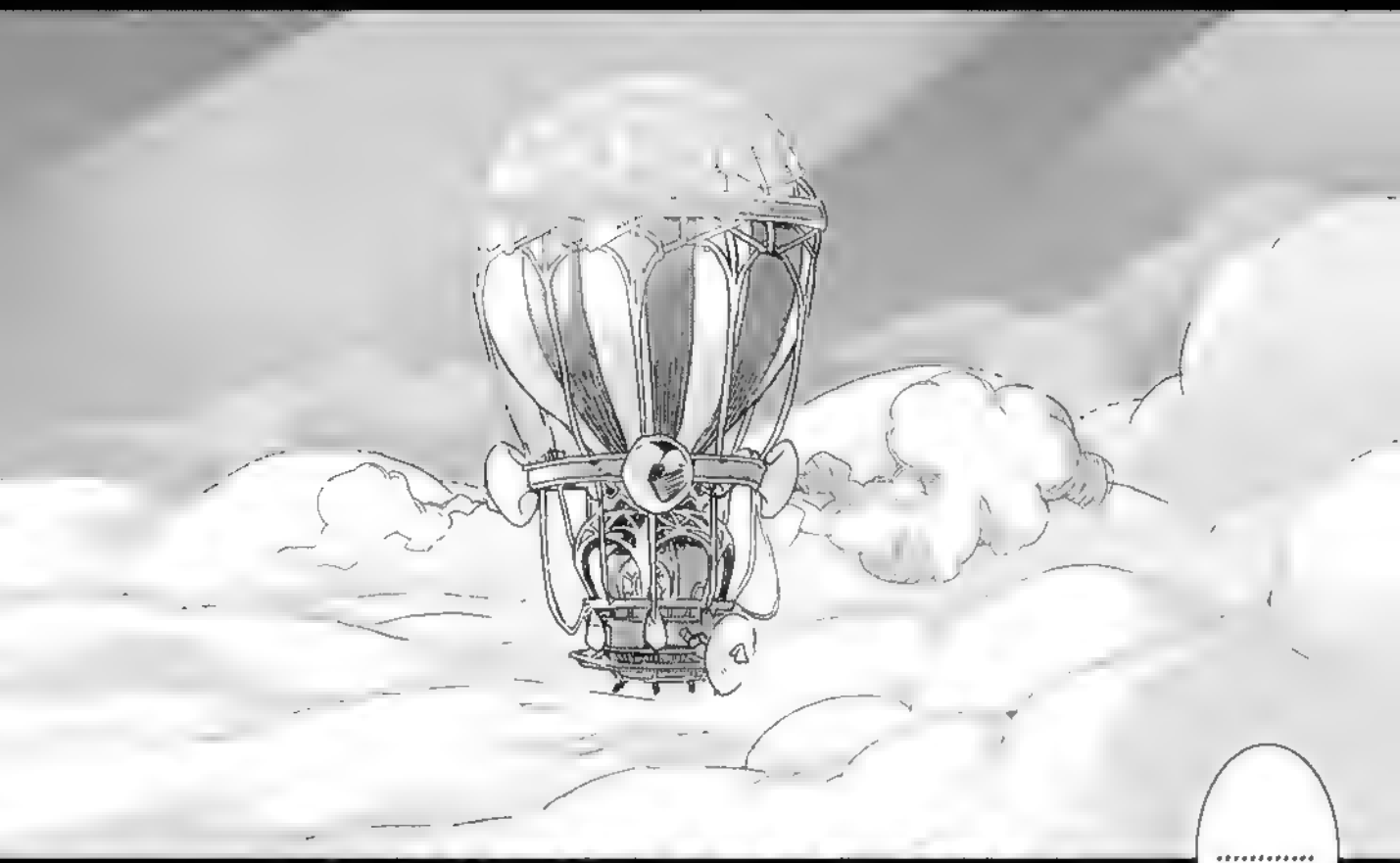
THERE'S NO WAY...



...EVEN ON HER OWN?

...BUT RATHER THAN FLYING IN THAT AGAIN, I SUPPOSE IT'S EASIER FOR HER TO CONTROL A STEAM-POWERED BALLOON, EVEN ON HER OWN.

THAT BEING SAID, SHE COULD WELL AFFORD TO BUY THIS NEW TYPE OF BALLOON HERSELF...



.....



BEAUTIFUL,
ISN'T IT?

OF COURSE
YOUR SENSES
DON'T WORK
OUT HERE.

THIS
WORLD
REJECTS
HUMANS.



A SEA OF
CLOUDS.



BUT
BEFORE THE
VASTNESS
OF THIS
WORLD...

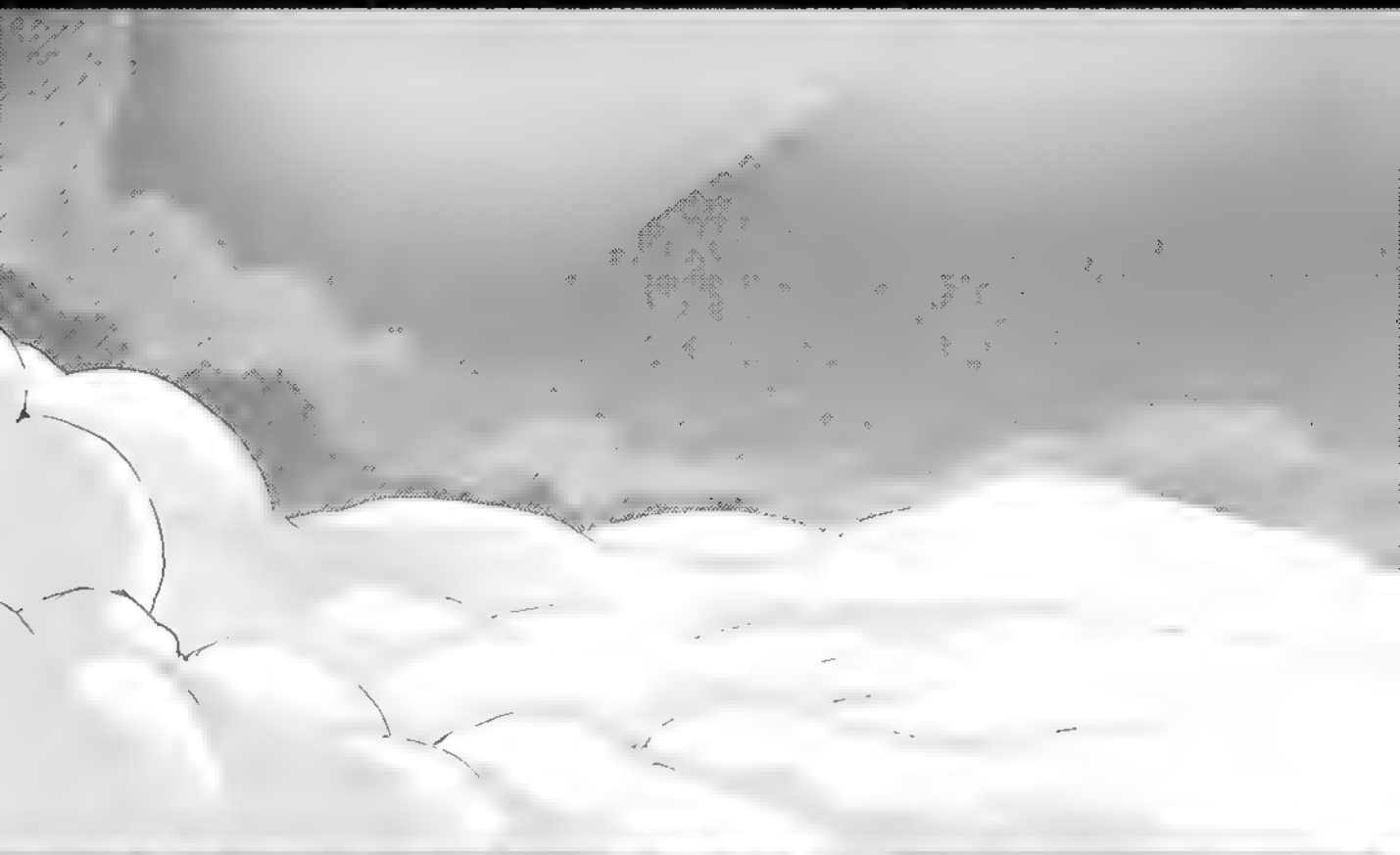
...I CAN
SENSE HOW
PRECIOUS
MY OWN
LIFE IS.

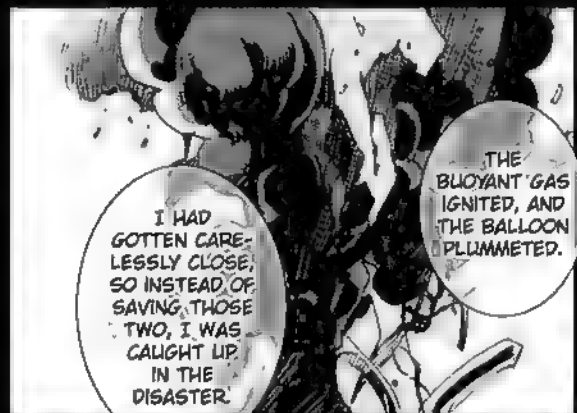
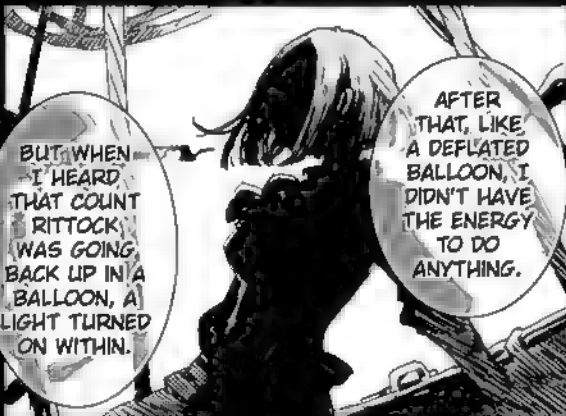


NO
SOUND,
NO WIND,
NO
SENSE OF
DISTANCE
...

IT'S
LIKE I
DON'T
KNOW
WHICH
SENSES
TO USE...

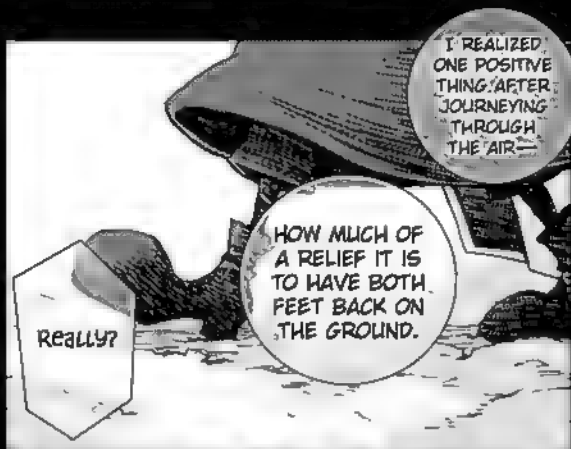
WHAT IS IT?
IT FEELS
STRANGE...











I REALIZED
ONE POSITIVE
THING AFTER
JOURNEYING
THROUGH
THE AIR—

HOW MUCH OF
A RELIEF IT IS
TO HAVE BOTH
FEET BACK ON
THE GROUND.

Really?



IT SEEMS
SHE WAS
ABLE TO SAY
FAREWELL TO
HER DEPARTED
HUSBAND UP
ABOVE THOSE
CLOUDS.

I'M SURE
MRS. SIVTAC
IS OKAY
NOW TOO.



I see.
Well,
good
to hear
it.

I GUESS
I'M JUST
NOT CUT
OUT FOR
AIR
TRAVEL.

IT TAKES
LONGER
THIS WAY,
BUT WE CAN
CHOOSE A
TRUST-
WORTHY
COURSE.



OH, THAT'S
RIGHT!
THERE'S
SOMETHING
THAT
BOthers
me.

CERTAINLY,
IT'S CLOSE
TO
HEAVEN...

OR
AT LEAST,
I FELT LIKE
I WENT TO A
WORLD THAT
EXISTS ON A
BORDER.



Since
we have to
cross that
mountain
range one
more
time...

...you'll be
able to enjoy
the relief of
feet on the
ground every
step of the
way.

.....



OH, NO,
THAT'S
NOT WHAT
I WAS
DOING.

It's not
like
you're a
thrill-
seeker.

WHY WERE
YOU SO
RECKLESS,
JUMPING
FROM ONE
BALLOON TO
ANOTHER?



OH!?

OH!

OH?

...LET'S
TRAVEL BY
THE LAKE
INSTEAD.

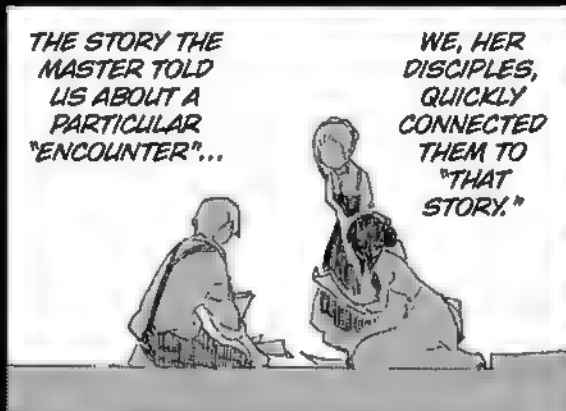
I CAN
ENDURE
ONE DAY OF
SEASICK-
NESS...



You were
closer to
Heaven
than the
rest of us!

IT LOOKED
LIKE I COULD
WALK OVER ON
TOP OF THE
CLOUDS...

...BUT I
FIGURED
IT WOULD
WORK OUT
SOMEHOW
EVEN IF I
FELL.





HUH!?
YOU
THINK A
WITCH
LIVES
HERE?

ARE
YOU
SHE?

I WAS
TOLD I'D
BE ABLE TO
MEET HER IF I
KNOCKED ON
THE DOOR OF
A HOUSE DEEP
IN THIS PINE
FOREST.



HMM...



I DON'T KNOW
WHO TOLD
YOU THAT OR
HOW MUCH
TROUBLE YOU
HAD GETTING
HERE...

...BUT
UNFORTU-
NATELY, THE
ONLY PERSON
THAT LIVES
HERE IS A
HERMIT.

...THAT'S
THE
FEELING
I'M
GETTING.



AHHH, NO
GOOD. I
GIVE UP!

I'M SICK
OF WOOD
MAN-
NEQUINS.

SCRABBLE



I'M SORRY
TO HAVE
BOtherED
YOU.

...WAIT,
NOBODY'S
TURNING
YOU
AWAY.

TAKE A
LOAD OFF
FOR A
WHILE.

I DIDN'T
THINK YOU
WOULD
BELIEVE
ME RIGHT
AWAY.

YES,
WELL...



I WISH
SOMEONE
WOULD
COME HERE
TO DIE.

OR
SOMEONE
WHO'S
ALREADY
CURSED
...

SIGH...



AND WHO
ARE YOU,
THEN?

...YOU'RE
NOT THE
WITCH I'M
ACQUAINTED
WITH, SO...

ACQUAINTED
WITH.



MM?

EXCUSE
ME.

I'M A TRAV-
ELER...





SUDDENLY
THERE
WAS FOG
EVERY-
WHERE...

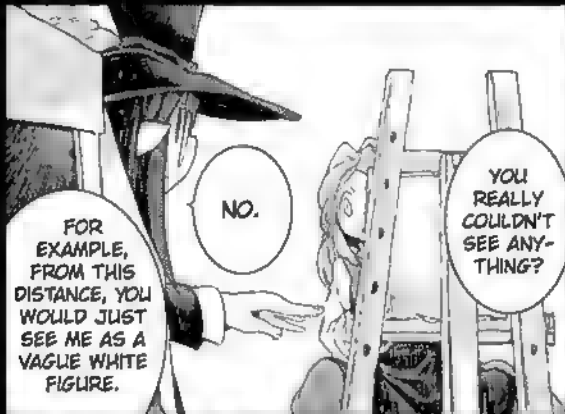
...SPREADING
THROUGHOUT
THE WHOLE
FOREST.

I
COULDN'T
SEE A
THING.



AM I
MAKING YOU
DO SOME-
THING SO
DIFFICULT?

WHAT'S
WRONG,
TRAV-
ELER?



FOR
EXAMPLE,
FROM THIS
DISTANCE, YOU
WOULD JUST
SEE ME AS A
VAGUE WHITE
FIGURE.

NO.

YOU
REALLY
COULDN'T
SEE ANY-
THING?



...BUT
I FEEL
VERY
UNCOM-
FORT-
ABLE...

NO...I
THOUGHT
IT WOULD
BE SIMPLE,
JUST
STANDING
HERE...

...WITH
YOU
STARING
AT ME.



...KIND
OF LIKE
THIS?

MM..
WAS THE
FOG...



I SEE...
I CAN'T
DO THIS IF
YOU MOVED
AROUND...

IN FACT,
TALKING
WOULD
PROBABLY
MAKE IT
SEEM
TO GO
FASTER.

...BUT
YOU CAN
THINK AND
TALK AS
YOU LIKE.



HMM...

THEN
HOW
ABOUT
THIS?

NO,
IT HAD
MORE OF
A MILKY
THICK-
NESS...

AND IT
LOOKED LIKE
THERE WERE
OVERLAP-
PING
LAYERS...



HMM..
SO MAY-
BE...

...YOU CAN
TELL ME
ABOUT YOUR
TRAVELS.





ALL RIGHT...
I'M GOING
TO FINISH
IT TODAY
FOR SURE!

AFTER
SPENDING
DAYS
TOGETHER,
I FEEL LIKE
I'VE FINALLY
SEEN IT!

ARE YOU
SURE?



AND
THE
DAY
AFTER
THAT...

AFTER
COMING
OUT OF THE
MOUNTAINS,
THERE WAS A
HUGE SETTING
SUN RIGHT
IN FRONT
OF ME...

MY WHOLE
BODY WAS
BRIGHT RED,
AS IF I WERE
ON FIRE.



AND
I DON'T
NEED YOU
TO TALK
TODAY.

THAT
JUST LEADS
MY BRUSH
IN STRANGE
DIRECTIONS.

OKAY
...



AND
THE
DAY
AFTER
THAT
TOO...

...THE
LIGHT STARTED
BOBBING AROUND,
WHICH IS WHEN I
FINALLY REALIZED
IT WAS REALLY
A SCHOOL OF
FISH.

WHEN I
REACHED
OUT TO THE
RIVER, WHICH
REFLECTED THE
PALE LIGHT
FROM ABOVE...



...WILL
YOU TELL
ME ABOUT
YOURSELF
TODAY?

IN THAT
CASE...



NO,
NO!!
ARGH!!

WHY DOES
IT KEEP
CHANGING
FROM A
SIMPLE
PORTRAIT??

AH, I
remember
that.

IT'S
MORE LIKE
A MOOD
THAN WHAT
I SAW...



...I'LL TELL
YOU WHY
PEOPLE
CALLED ME
A WITCH.

...ALL
RIGHT.

THEN...



Still, I'm
surprised
she
painted
all this...

...based
on your
monotone
retellings,
Kuro.



?

YES,
I AM,
BUT...

ARE YOU
THE ONE
WHO
PAINTED...

...THE
DUKE'S
POR-
TRAIT?



BUT FEMALE
PAINTERS LACK
SKILL AND TEND
TO ARRANGE
COLORS LIKE
A PEACOCK.

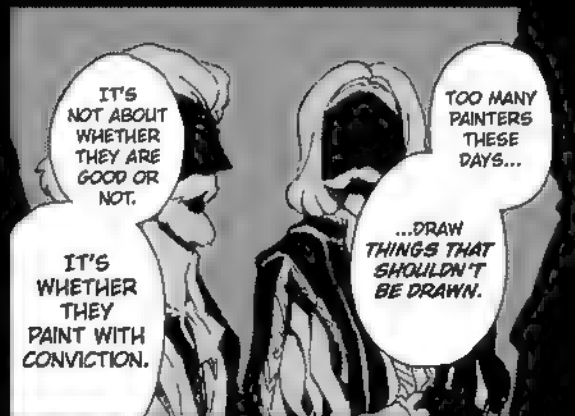
IS
THAT THE
PAINTER
EVEN THE
GUILD
TALKS
ABOUT?

SHE'S
STILL A
YOUNG
WOMAN.



EXCUSE
ME, BUT
WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING!?

WE ARE
TAKING
THIS
PAINTING.



IT'S
NOT ABOUT
WHETHER
THEY ARE
GOOD OR
NOT.

IT'S
WHETHER
THEY
PAINT WITH
CONVICTION.

TOO MANY
PAINTERS
THESE
DAYS...

...DRAW
THINGS THAT
SHOULDN'T
BE DRAWN.



BUT
I'M NOT
FINISHED
WITH IT!

THAT WON'T BE
NECESSARY.

AT LEAST
LET ME
OBTAIN THE
DUKE'S PER-
MISSION...



TH-
THANK
YOU.

I'M GLAD
I COM-
MISS-
SIONED YOU
FOR THE
WORK.

YES, YOU
PAINTED
HIM WITH
A VERY
GENTLE
EXPRESSION.



THE
DUKE IS
GOING TO BE
EXECUTED FOR
THE CRIME
OF PLOTTING
TREASON
AGAINST THE
NATION.

AND AS
SUCH, THIS
PAINTING WILL
BE BURNED AS
A WARNING
TO THE PEOPLE.



R-
RIGHT!

NOW
JUST
DEEPEN HIS
MUSTACHE
A LITTLE TO
BRING OUT
A SENSE OF
GRAVITY.

AND
MAKE
THE GOLD
EMBROIDERY
ON HIS
SLEEVES
AND COLLAR
STAND OUT
MORE.





...STARTING
HER PURSUIT
OF PAINTING
FROM
SCRATCH.



AND
SO, THE
MASTER
TRAVELED
AROUND
THE
WORLD...

WELL,
WE'VE
STAYED
HERE TOO
LONG
ANYWAY.

ALTHOUGH
SHE SEEMED
TO BE IN A
HURRY...

What
the
hell?

SHE KICKS
US OUT OF
HER HOUSE
AT DAWN
...?



...AND
NURTURED
MANY
DISCIPLES.



THEN SHE
LED THE
WAY TO A
NEW AGE OF
PAINTING!!

I'M
GOING TO
TRAVEL
TOO!

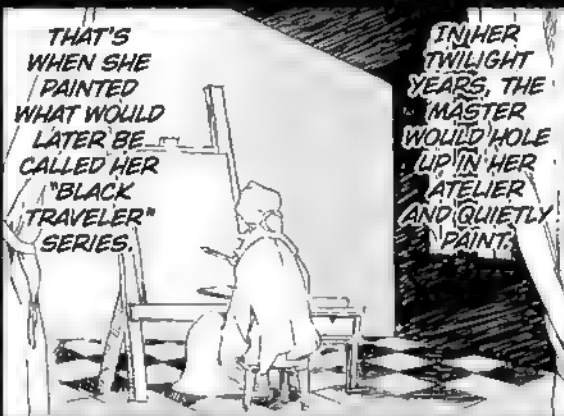
FROM
TODAY,
WE'RE
FELLOW
TRAVEL-
ERS!!

AM?

AH!!



THAT'S
WHEN SHE
PAINTED
WHAT WOULD
LATER BE
CALLED HER
"BLACK
TRAVELER"
SERIES.



IN HER
TWILIGHT
YEARS, THE
MASTER
WOULD HOLD
UP IN HER
ATELIER
AND QUIETLY
PAINT.

YOU
FASCINATED
ME...

...WITH
YOUR TALES
THAT WENT
BEYOND THE
CANVAS.



OR PERHAPS
IT WAS THE
MASTER
HERSELF
PAINTING
"SELF-
PORTRAITS."



WAS
THE MOTIF
TAKEN
FROM THE
TRAVELER
IN HER
PAST?

...THE
KIND OF
WORLD
THAT YOU
SAW.

I WANT
TO TRY
PAINTING
...





The traveler has a hard time talking about what happened here.
That's because it's difficult to convey to other people
what occurs in a dream.



KURO-
CHA...

ARE YOU
OKAY?



.....

I SEE.



BUT ARE
THEY STILL
HERE?

YEAH...
I'M
FINE.



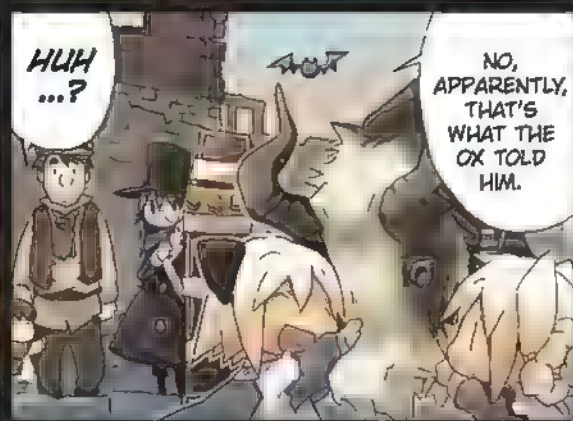
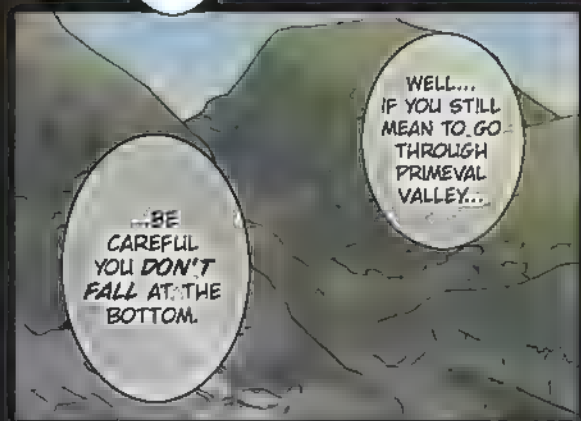
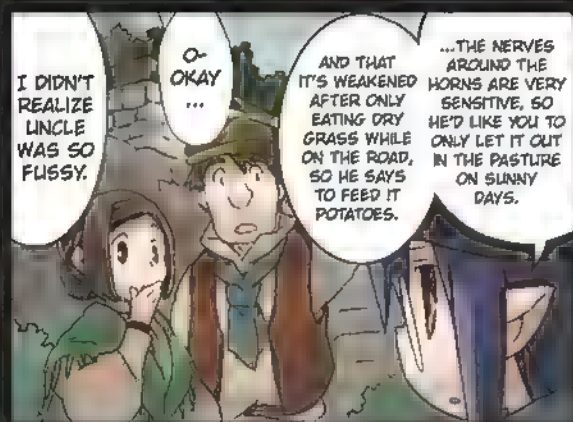
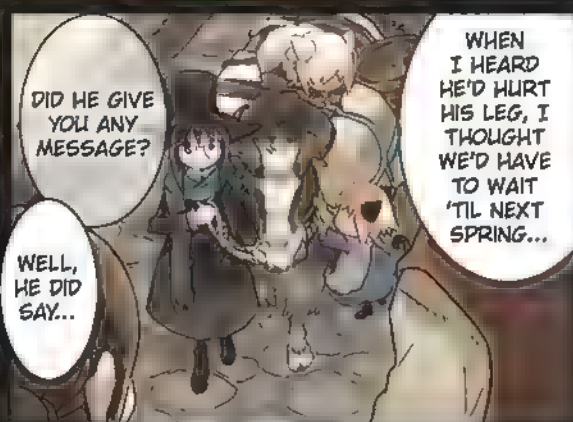
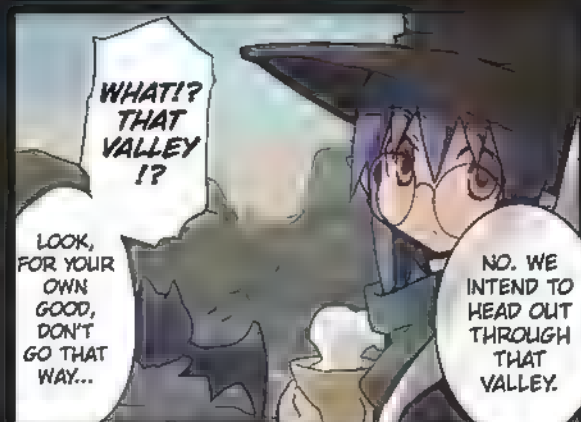
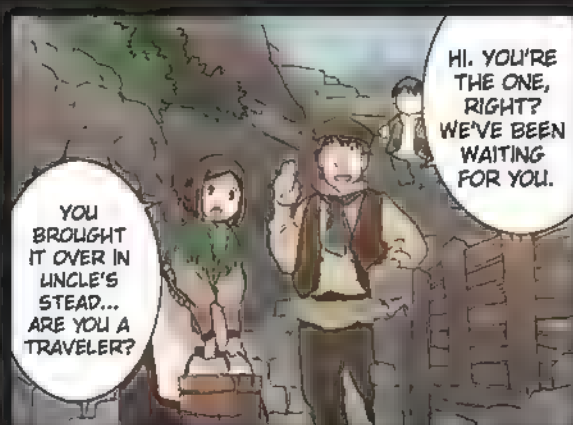
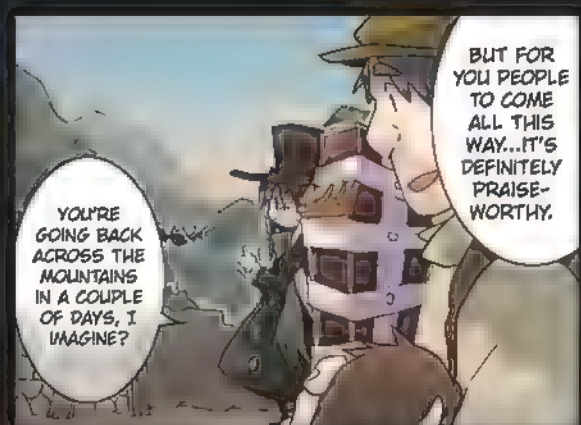
IS THIS...

...WHAT HE
MEANT BY
"FALLING"?



STARING
FROM
OVER
THERE.

YES.





From the name, "primeval Valley"...

...I imagined it would be so overrun with cedar trees and virgin forest that we wouldn't be able to set foot in it.



It looks like there could be falling rocks in that area.



But this is a lot easier to traverse than any mountains.

I DON'T KNOW...



ROCKS ...?

HUH?



Don't put your hand there, Kuro.











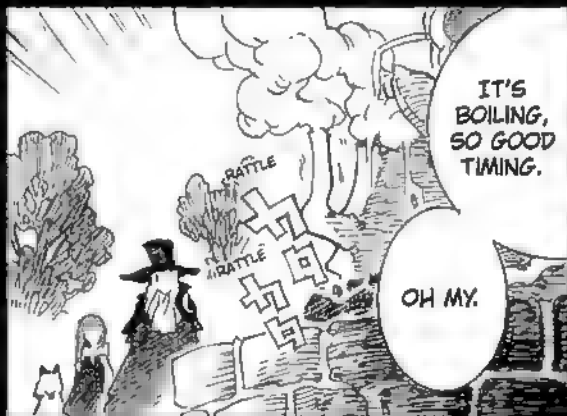














THIS
CUP OF
"COFFEE."

THEN
LET'S
GET TO
THE REAL
ISSUE.



BEFORE,
YOU SAID THIS
SCENERY WAS
STRANGE...

NOW,
THEN.



YOU
MIX...

IT'S THE
WORLD
YOU
USUALLY
SEE.

...MILK,
THE EGO,
WITH THE
COFFEE, THE
OBJECTIVE.

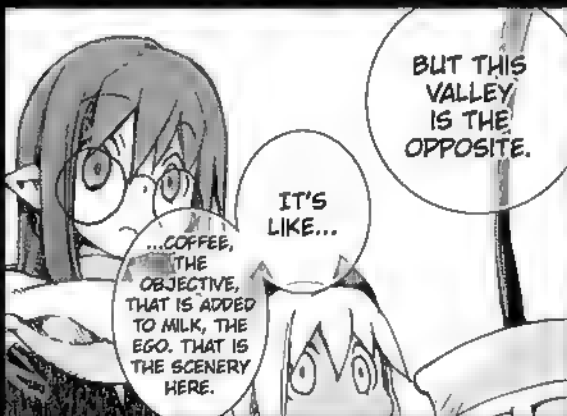


...BUT
CONVERSELY,
WHAT IS THE
SCENERY ON
THE ROAD...

WHAT
IS
IT?

...THAT YOU
CONSIDER
NORMAL?

WELL, THE
SCENERY IS
JUST WHAT
YOU CAN
SEE...



BUT THIS
VALLEY
IS THE
OPPOSITE.

IT'S
LIKE...

...COFFEE,
THE
OBJECTIVE,
THAT IS ADDED
TO MILK, THE
EGO. THAT IS
THE SCENERY
HERE.



NOTING
THE DIRECTION
OF THE WIND
AND MOVEMENT
OF THE CLOUDS,
LOOKING FOR
A SAFE FOOT-
HOLD...

...BEING
DISTRACTED
BY A BIRD'S
NEST OR AN
ANIMAL'S
TAIL...

...
COMPARING
IT TO
SCENERY I
SAW A LONG
TIME AGO...



AND
WHICH
WAS
"COFFEE"
FIRST?

WHICH
OF THESE
WAS "MILK"
FIRST?

SO,
QUESTION—

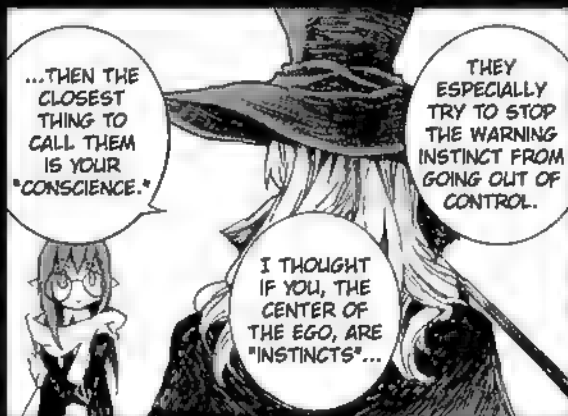
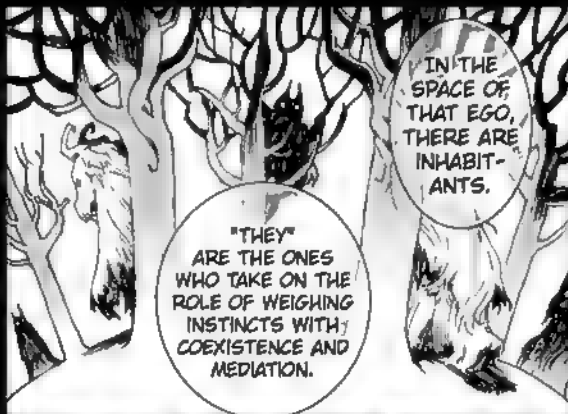


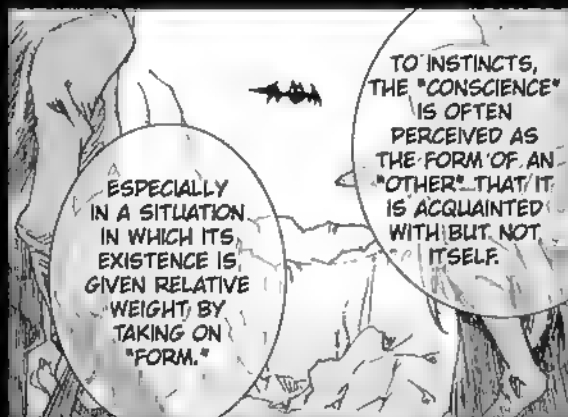
THAT
BLEND
IS THE
"SCENERY"
WE
USUALLY
SEE.

AND SO,
EVERYTHING
WE SEE...
THE
OBJECTIVE
...

...IS
MIXED WITH
OUR OWN
SENSES,
THE EGO.









OH
YEAH.

I CAN
FEEL A
BIT OF
A WIND.

THE EXIT
IS RIGHT
THROUGH
THERE.



APPARENTLY
THEY WERE
RUNNING
AFTER YOU IN
AN ATTEMPT
TO RETURN
IT.

.....



WE'RE
DONE BEING
TOGETHER?

AND THIS
IS WHERE
WE PART
WAYS.

MY DES-
TINATION
LIES IN A
DIFFERENT
DIRECTION.



I WAS
CON-
VINCED...



OH, I
NEARLY
FORGOT.

I HAVE TO
RETURN
THIS TOO.



...BUT
IF THAT'S
NOT THE
CASE...

...THEY'D
STOLEN
THE
COFFIN...

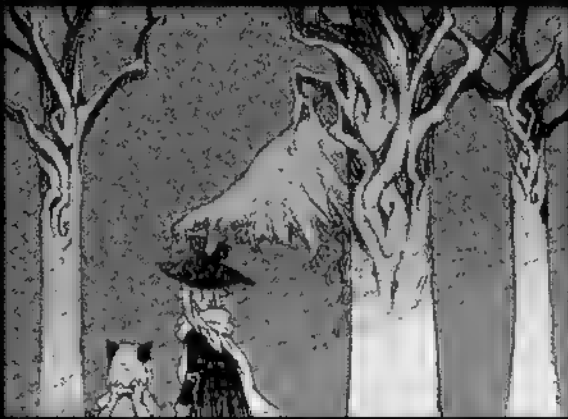


HERE.

TRY NOT
TO DROP
IT AGAIN.



...THEN
MAYBE I
ACTUALLY
WANTED
TO...
...ABANDON
THE
COFFIN?





IF THAT'S WHAT YOU SAY...

BUT...

...I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT.



...OH?

I THINK YOU WERE WRONG...

...ABOUT JUST ONE THING.



GOOD QUESTION...

...THEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?



I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I WOULD HAVE WILLINGLY DROPPED IT.

THIS COFFIN IS THE "INSTINCT" OF MY JOURNEY.



FROM DOING WHAT?

PERHAPS ...

...THEY WANTED TO STOP YOU.



I MAY LOSE MY BELONGINGS AND MY COMRADES...

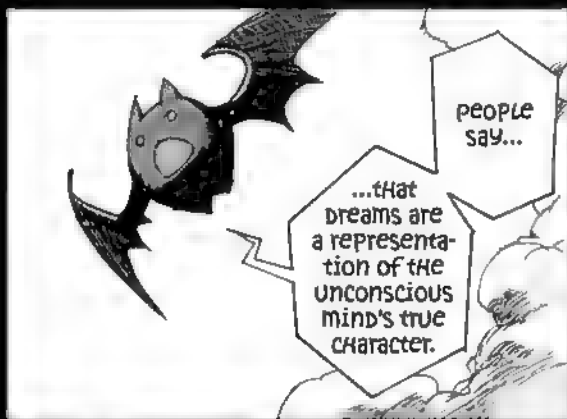
...BUT UNTIL THE END, I WON'T BE SEPARATED FROM THIS COFFIN.



GOING TO AN EARLY GRAVE.



.....



people
say...

...that
dreams are
a representa-
tion of the
unconscious
mind's true
character.



YES,
I KNEW
HIM.

THE
PERSON
WHO
GAVE ME
THIS HAT
EARLIER...

DID YOU
KNOW HIM,
NIJUKU?



SO
THAT'S WHY
YOU LOOK
UNCOMFORT-
ABLE...

...EVEN
THOUGH
YOU CLAIM
IT DIDN'T
AFFECT
YOU.

When
you have an
unbelievable
dream that
makes you
wonder why
you're having
it...

...you
wake up and
are later
tormented by
a sense of
guilt.



I MET HIM
BEFORE
SOME-
WHERE.

BUT I
FORGET
WHERE.

...I
SEE.



IT WAS A
DREAM...

IT WAS A
LIE...

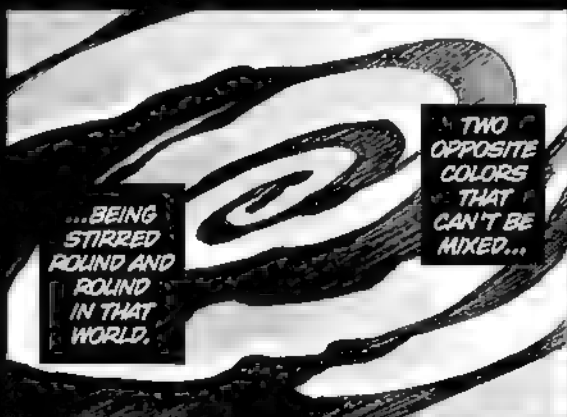
...BUT
IT WAS
ALSO
REALITY.

...BUT
IT WAS
ALSO
THE
TRUTH.



UNTIL
WE MET,
NIJUKU HAD
NEVER BEEN
OUTSIDE.

SO I
DON'T SEE
HOW SHE
COULD BE
ACQUAINTED
WITH HIM...



...BEING
STIRRED
ROUND AND
ROUND
IN THAT
WORLD.

TWO
OPPOSITE
COLORS
THAT
CAN'T BE
MIXED...



HE MAY
HAVE BEEN
AN IMAGE
CONJURED
UP BY MY
OWN MIND.





UH-UH.
NOT THIS
TIME.

MAKE
EXCUSES
TO AUNT
FOR ME.

HUH?
YOU'RE
RUNNING
AWAY FROM
HOME
AGAIN?



I JUST
FINISHED MY
NEW MODEL.
WANT TO
SEE IT?

ADELE,
ARE YOU
STILL
AWAKE?



WHOA...

THE
STARS
HAVE
ALREADY
STARTED
FALLING.



THE BEAK
OF THIS BIRD
OF PASSAGE
IS A LITTLE
UNUSUAL...

...HUH?
WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

SORRY.
I'M GOING
OUT AGAIN
FOR A
WHILE.



...SO
TONIGHT,
I'M GOING
TO SEARCH
FOR A
STAR.

THIS ONLY
HAPPENS
ONE NIGHT
A YEAR...



I...

I'LL HIDE
FOR NOW!

YIKES
...!



FEELS LIKE
SOMEONE'S
BEEN
FOLLOWING
ME...

WHAT
IS IT?



BUT IF
I MISS IT
TONIGHT, THE
STARS...

MAYBE I
SHOULD
JUST GO
BACK
HOME.



...ABOUT
A BIG MAN
WITH A KNIFE
WHO LURKS
IN DESOLATE
ALLEYS AND
STRIKES FROM
BEHIND...

COME TO
THINK OF IT,
THERE ARE
THE BIZARRE
RUMORS AT
SCHOOL...



HUH?

A
LADY
?



CHUCKLE

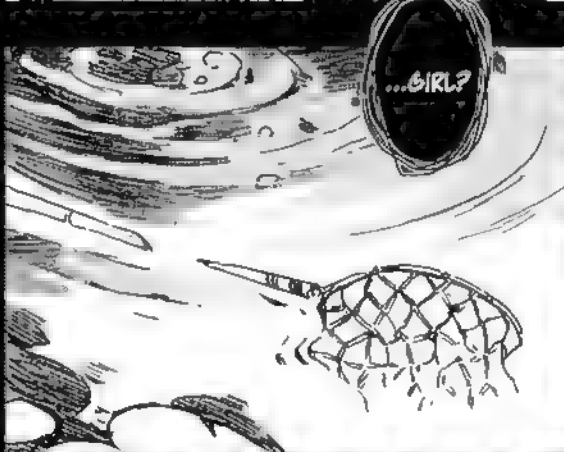


!

SOMEONE'S
COMING!









TODAY'S
FIGHT IS
FLASHING
BEFORE
MY EYES...

THIS
IS THE
PITS.



...LIGHT...



SO
BEAUTI-
FUL...

THE SURFACE
OF THE
WATER IS
GLITTERING.

(BUT
THAT'S
FINE...



MOM!?

BOLT



IT FEELS
WARM...

WHAT'S
THAT?
SOMETHING
BIG AND
GLOWING
COMING
TOWARDS
ME.



JUST
THE LIGHT
OF A
LANTERN...

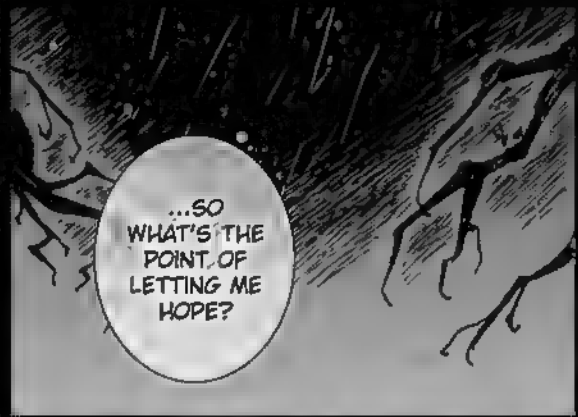
...OH.

THUD
どて



YOUR
MOTHER
IS...

ADELE...









Man, look at all those shooting stars!

You can make as many wishes as you want!



THAT'S RIGHT. I JUST REMEMBERED!

I BETTER MAKE A WISH TO NOT ENCOUNTER THE MAD SLASHER ON THE WAY HOME!

MAD... SLASHER?



What, you're not interested in superstitions?

NO, THAT'S NOT IT...

A WISH, HUH...?



YES! I HEAR A BIG MAN WITH A KNIFE ATTACKS PEOPLE UNDER THE COVER OF NIGHT!

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH NOT TO RUN ACROSS HIM ON THE WAY HERE, BUT...

BUT YOU DID.

WHAT?!



I JUST HAVE A FEELING THAT THIS HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO.

THAT THE "WISH" CAME OUT OF MY MOUTH EASILY BUT I FELT TERRIBLE REGRET LATER.



...SO I SNUFFED HIM OUT.

HE WAS FOLLOWING YOU, WHICH BOTHERED ME...

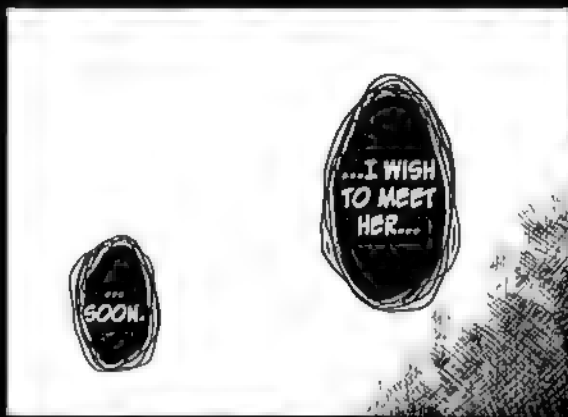
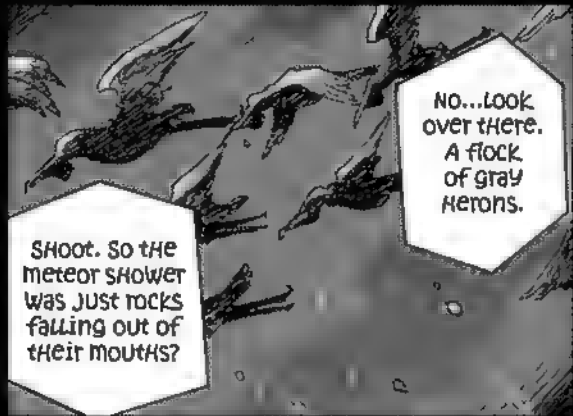


WHAT WAS MY WISH...?



...ONLY HIS SHADOW LINGERS.

PERHAPS...





Ditto.

I SUSPECT IT'S HER WORK.



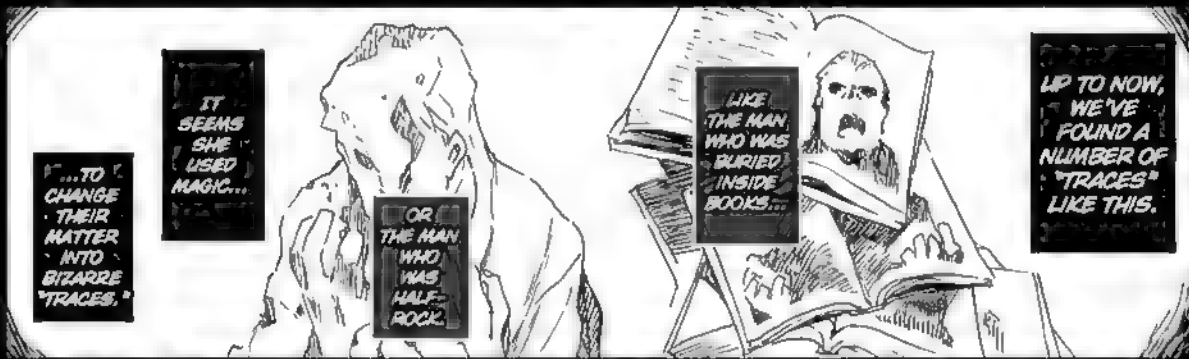
...LOTTING AROUND THIS WALL.

AT NIGHT, YOU CAN SEE THE SHADOW OF A BIG MAN...



JUST LIKE WE HEARD. FOR THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, APPARENTLY...

Yep, there it is.



...TO CHANGE THEIR MANNER INTO BIZARRE "TRACES."

IT SEEMS SHE USED MAGIC...

OR THE MAN WHO WAS HALF-ROCK

LIKE THE MAN WHO WAS BURIED INSIDE BOOKS...

UP TO NOW, WE'VE FOUND A NUMBER OF "TRACES" LIKE THIS.



I WONDER WHY SHE CHANGED YOU INTO A BAT, SEN.



seriously? then there's no chance she'll change me back to normal.

...THAT SHE HATES MEN.



...no, it's not like i'm desperate...

...ARE YOU IN A HURRY TO CHANGE BACK?



...don't worry about me for the time being.

well...

AND I'M NOT THAT ATTACHED TO MY PREVIOUS HUMAN LIFE.



WHEN WE MANAGE TO GET TO THEM IN TIME TO ASK WHAT HAPPENED...

I DON'T KNOW, SUDDENLY...

...A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN... WITH BLACK HAIR...

...THEY ALWAYS TELL US ABOUT HER.



I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE, BUT I GET THE SENSE...

...but she doesn't show men any mercy, does she?

I think this every time we run across one of her horrors...



I DON'T THINK THEY EVEN TALK.



*At every destination, the travelers search for "traces"
that the witch left behind. And sometimes they even
encounter their past or future "selves."*







...SOME.

HAVE YOU EVER MET SOMEBODY LIKE US IN OTHER PLACES YOU'VE BEEN TO?



NO, NO. HALF OF IT'S DUE TO SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE MEDICINE.

You've... changed a lot.

IS THIS WHAT YOU USED TO LOOK LIKE?



OF COURSE ...

...IF THEY WERE, YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE.

WERE ANY OF THEM CURED?

.....



I THINK ONLY ONE MEDICINE WAS ABLE TO KEEP THE SYMPTOMS IN CHECK.

THEY SUBJECTED ME TO ALL KINDS OF MEDICINE AND MAGIC, ANYTHING THAT HAD A SHOT AT CURING THIS.



...THERE'S SOMEONE WHO CAN USE "MAGIC" WELL.

I KEEP HOPING...



IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOME NEW INFECTIOUS DISEASE DRUG FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY.

IT WORKED FOR ABOUT A YEAR...

...BUT THEN THEY COULDN'T GET ANY MORE OF IT.



MAGIC?

NOT CURSES?



THANKS TO THAT THOUGH, THEY'VE BEEN TREATING IT LIKE A VIRUS.

IS SHE a ZOMBIE instead of a witch?

MEDICINE FOR AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE ...



THANK YOU FOR TALKING TO US.

YEAH.

...YOU'RE GOING?



DO YOU REMEMBER...

...EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU ENCOUNTERED THE WITCH?

OF COURSE.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH I'D LIKE TO FORGET IT...



I...

...MAY NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN, HUH?

well ...

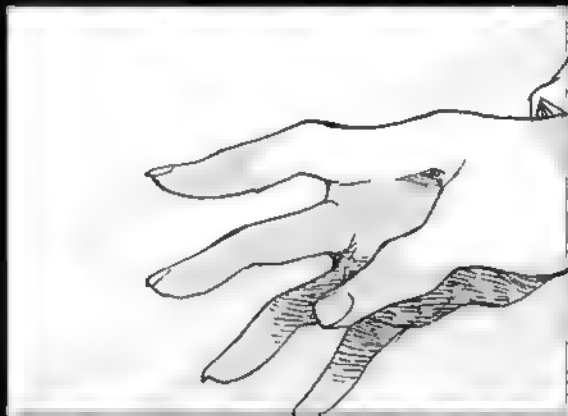
Like-wise.



WAIT...

COME TO THINK OF IT, THERE IS SOMETHING I'VE FORGOTTEN.

WHAT HAPPENED RIGHT BEFORE AND AFTER SHE CAST THE CURSE...



I THINK...

...I MADE A BET OR SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT WITH HER.

BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS.

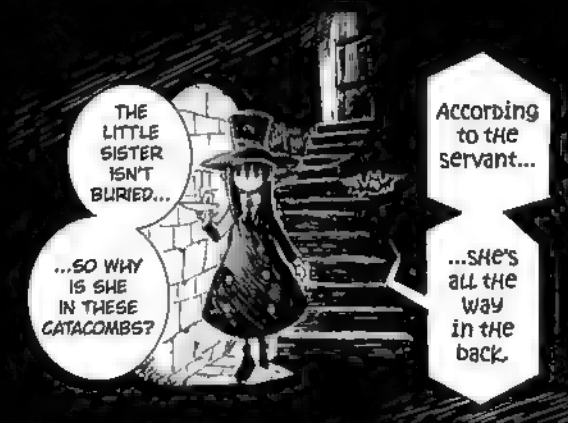


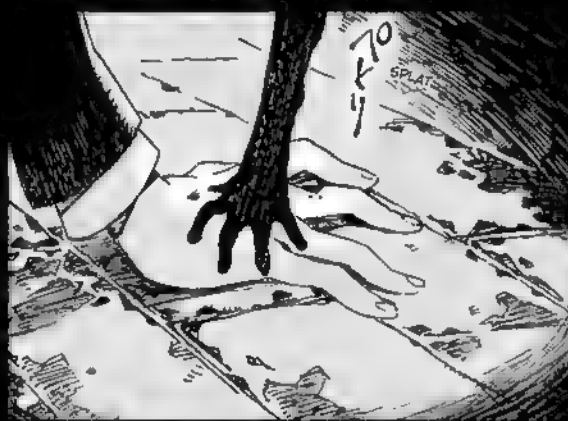
SINCE I CAN'T REMEMBER...

...I THOUGHT MAYBE MAGIC CHANGED INTO A CURSE...

...AND THIS IS THE RESULT.













OH,
THESE
GLOVES?

I
BOUGHT
THEM
YESTER-
DAY.



YOUR
HANDS
WILL BE
WARMER
...

...IF YOU
HOLD
NIJUKU'S
HAND.



ARE
THEY
WARM?

I
RECKONED
IT'S GOING
TO GET
COLD
SOON.

LUCKY!



THAT'S
WHAT
KURO-CHAN
SAID
ABOUT HER
GLOVES...

"ONLY
WHEN
IT'S
COLD."



KURO-
CHAN...

WELL
...

SHALL
WE BE
GOING?



...SHE
NEVER
TOOK
THEM
OFF.

...BUT
AFTER
THAT...



CAN
WE...

...HOLD
HANDS?

...STEP-MOTHER
WILL SCOLD
YOU AGAIN.

IF YOU
GO HOME
WITH YOUR
EYES SWOL-
LEN FROM
TEARS...

COME ON,
MILLY.

PLEASE
STOP
CRYING.

MILLY!

REAL-
LY!?

MOM
WILL
COME
BACK?

...YOU MAY
BE ABLE
TO MAKE
THAT WISH
COME
TRUE...

IF YOU
USE MY
POWER
WELL...

YOU
WANT
TO...

THERE
YOU GO
AGAIN
WITH
THAT...

I DON'T
WANT
TO GO
HOME.

I WANT
TO SEE
MOM.

...SEE
YOUR
MOTHER
AGAIN?

...COULD
EVEN
SLIGHTLY
GET
BACK
AT...

...OUR
STEP-
MOTHER
FOR
SEDUCING
OUR
FATHER...

THAT
DEPENDS
ON YOU.

...IF
THAT
"POWER"
...

...IS IT
TRUE?

...
BUT
...

UNLIKE
MY LITTLE
SISTER...

...I DIDN'T
THINK
IT WAS
POSSIBLE
TO SEE
OUR DEAD
MOTHER
AGAIN...

...URGED
ME TO
TAKE THE
HANDS...

...OF THE
SORCERESS.

AND SO MY
CHILDISH,
REBELLIOUS
HEART...

IF IT WOULD
MAKE HIM PAY
ATTENTION TO
US AGAIN...

...AND OUR
FATHER, FOR
FORGETTING
HOW HAPPY
WE ONCE
WERE...

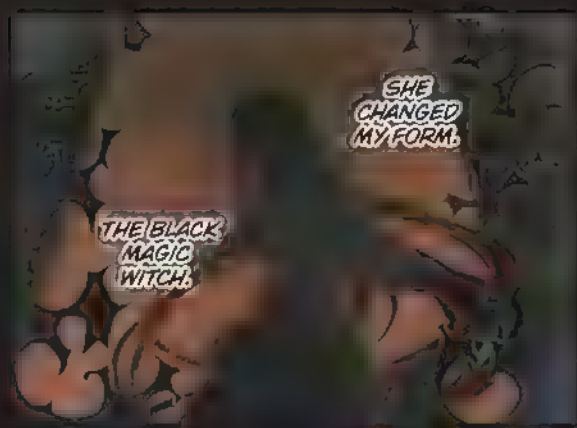


What the traveler in black wanted to know was always within her, from the start. But she had the feeling that she'd sealed it off deep inside because to reveal it would make her not a traveler, but a witch.



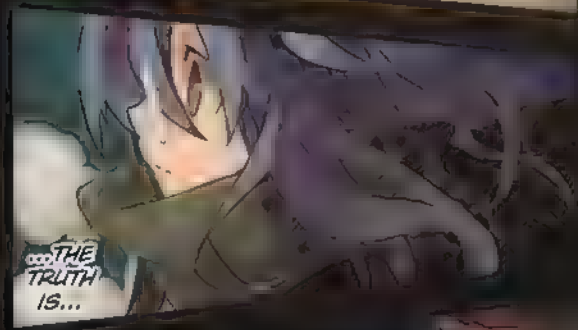
TRAILING
HER...

...BUT...



SHE
CHANGED
MY FORM.

THE BLACK
MAGIC
WITCH.



...THE
TRUTH
IS...

THE
TRUTH
IS...

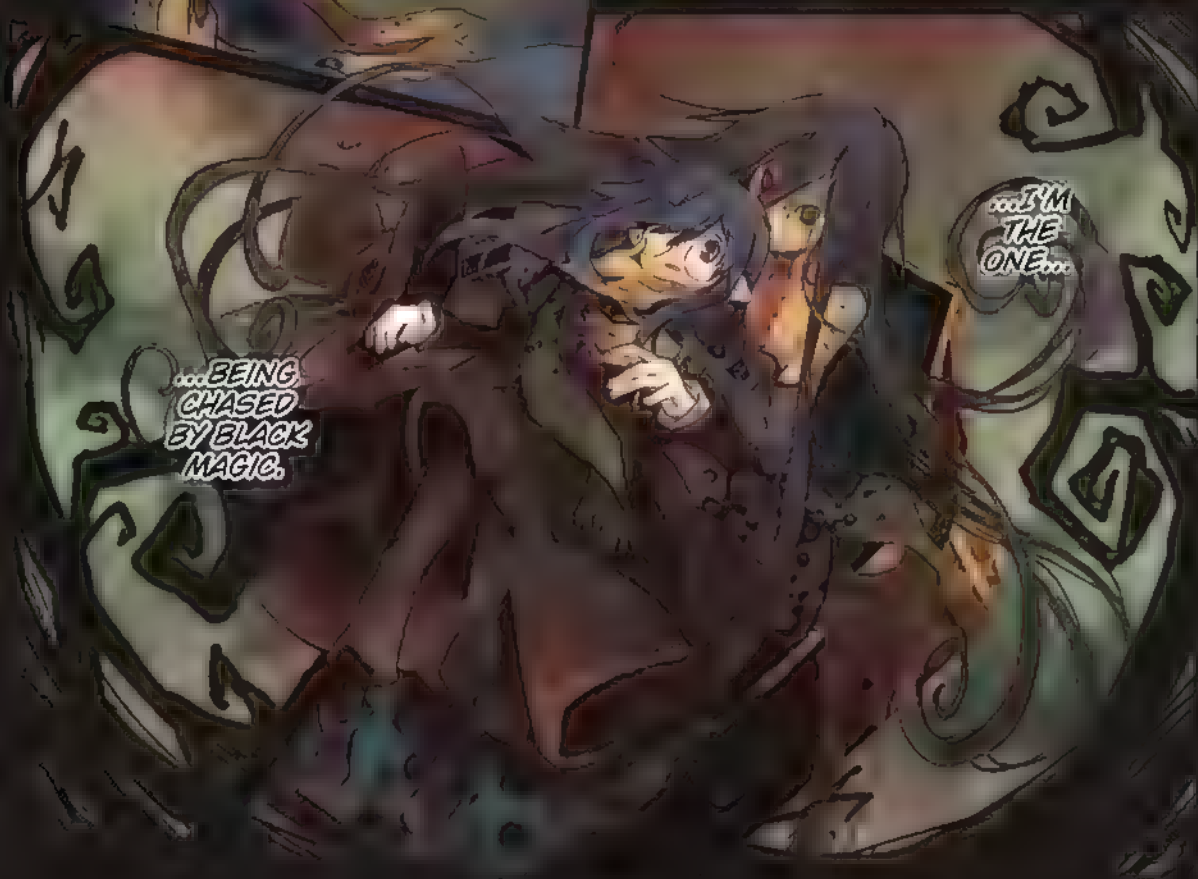
THAT'S
RIGHT.



CHASING
AFTER
HER...

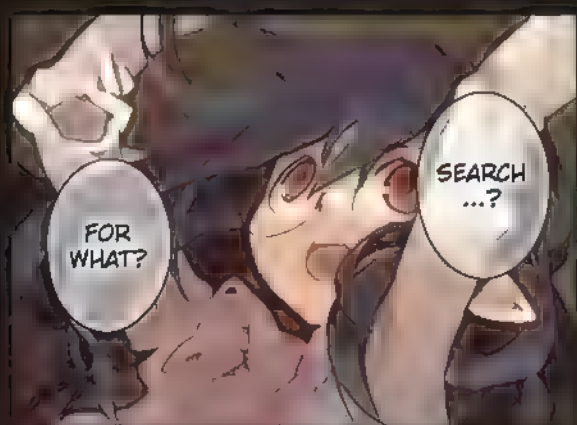
I'M
SEARCHING
FOR HER...

PURSUING
HER...



...BEING
CHASED
BY BLACK
MAGIC.

...I'M
THE
ONE...



FOR WHAT?

SEARCH ...?



I TOLD YOU.

I'VE BEEN HERE FROM THE BEGINNING.

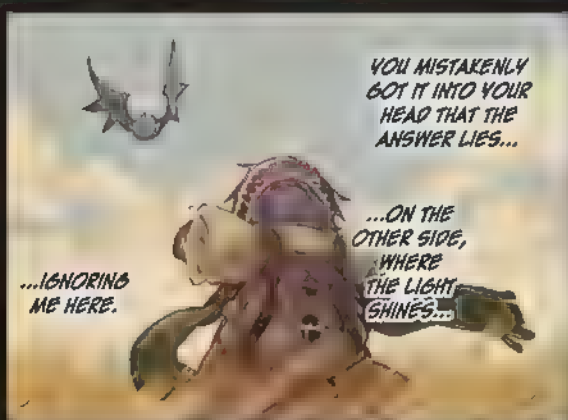
YOU APPEAR AGAIN...

...EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE ONLY A VISION.



...THAT I DON'T.

WHAT YOU HAVE...



YOU MISTAKENLY GOT IT INTO YOUR HEAD THAT THE ANSWER LIES...

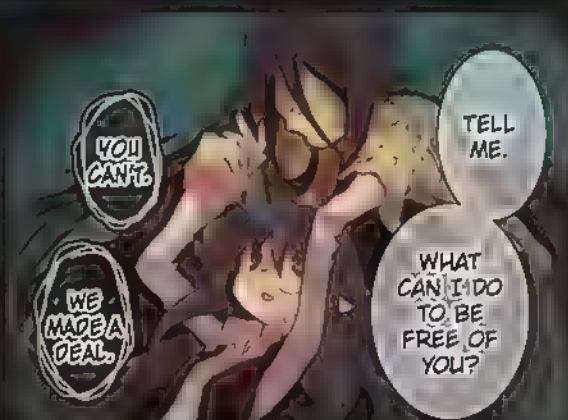
...IGNORING ME HERE.

...ON THE OTHER SIDE, WHERE THE LIGHT SHINES...



...WHAT IS YOURS.

FOR NOW, I AM HOLDING ...



YOU CAN'T.

WE MADE A DEAL.

TELL ME.

WHAT CAN I DO TO BE FREE OF YOU?



IF YOU DON'T FIND IT SOON...

...YOU'LL ROT.



THAT YOU WOULD SEARCH FOR IT...

A DEAL BOUND BY MAGIC.

...IN MY STEAD.



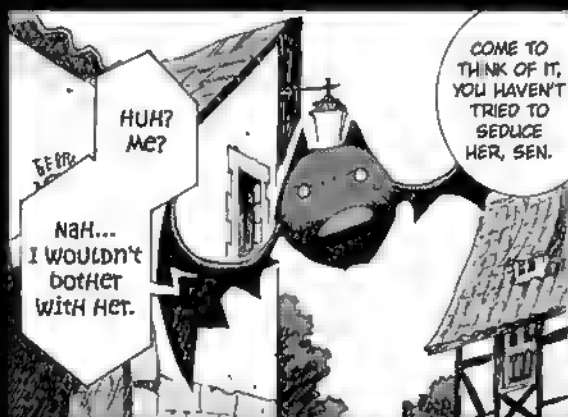




I WILL,
THANK
YOU.

YOUR
PASS IS
IN ORDER.
YOU MAY
PROCEED.

JUST
BE
CARE-
FUL.



HUH?
ME?

NAH...
I WOULDN'T
BOTHER
WITH HER.

COME TO
THINK OF IT,
YOU HAVEN'T
TRIED TO
SEDUCE
HER, SEN.



IT TAKES
HALF A DAY
JUST TO
CROSS THE
BRIDGE.

IT'LL BE
MORNING
WHEN
WE GET
THERE.



After
all...

...she
reminds
me of
you.



THE NIGHT
IS LONG,
SO EAT THE
FOOD I'VE
PACKED AND
RELAX.

I'M
SORRY
YOU HAVE
TO SUFFER
THROUGH
THIS...

DINNER!



SHE LOOKS
LIKE SHE ISN'T
BOtherED
BY WHAT
SHE'S GONE
THROUGH...

...but I
bet she
feels it.

...HUH?
REALLY?



COUNT
ON IT!

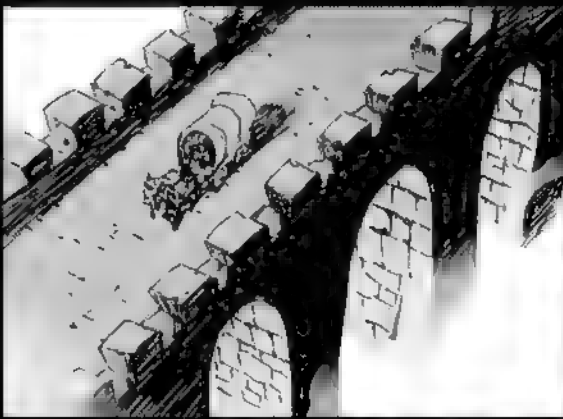
...BUT IF
YOU COULD,
WHEN YOU
TALK, PLEASE
SPEAK LOUDLY
ENOUGH SO I
CAN HEAR.

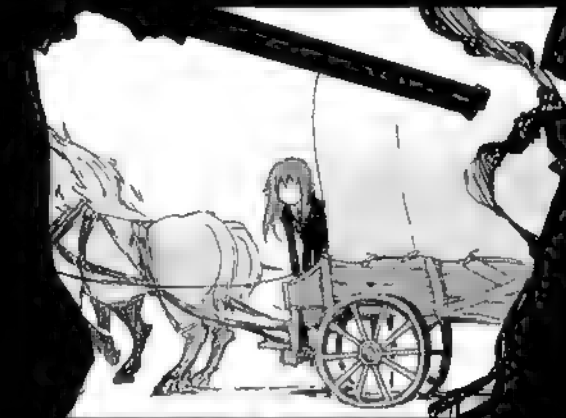
THAT
HELPS
DISTRACT
ME.

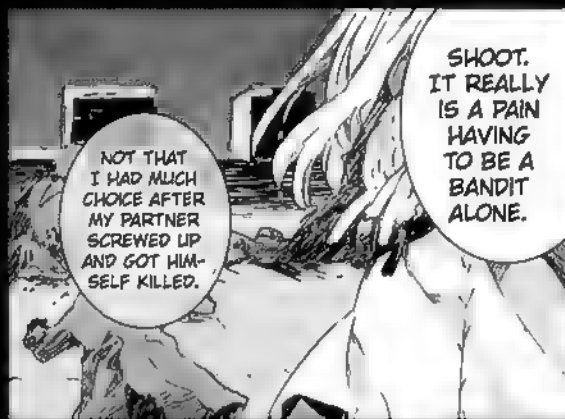


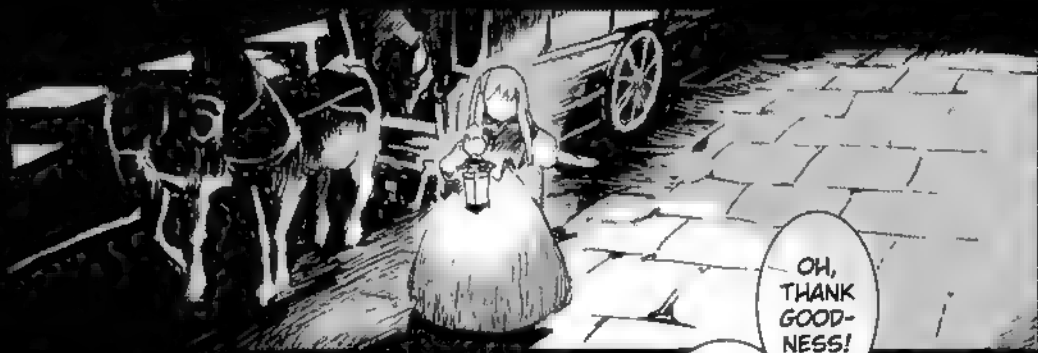
...I
DON'T
KNOW
ABOUT
THAT.











OH,
THANK
GOOD-
NESS!



YOU
STOPPED!

UM...

PLEASE,
SOMETHING
DIRE HAS
HAPPENED
...



MMM
...

I'M SURE
YOUR
WAGON IS
SPEEDIER
...

WE WERE
TRANSPORT-
ING BARRELS
OF LIQUOR TO
THE HARBOR
TOWN...

...WHEN
FATHER
SUDDENLY
FELL ILL...

...SO WOULD
YOU TAKE
MY FATHER
AND ME THERE?



BLANC
...

YES.

I WILL
THIS
WILL ALL
BE OVER
SOON.

I'M
SORRY.

ACTU-
ALLY, I'M
GRATE-
FUL...

EVERY-
ONE
HERE...

...IS
JUST
PATHE-
TIC.

THIS
MAKES
MY JOB
EASIER.

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

NEVER
MIND ME,
TAKE CARE
OF THE
CARGO.



...ISN'T
FEAR OF
DEATH.

THIS 'MUDDLED
SENSATION...

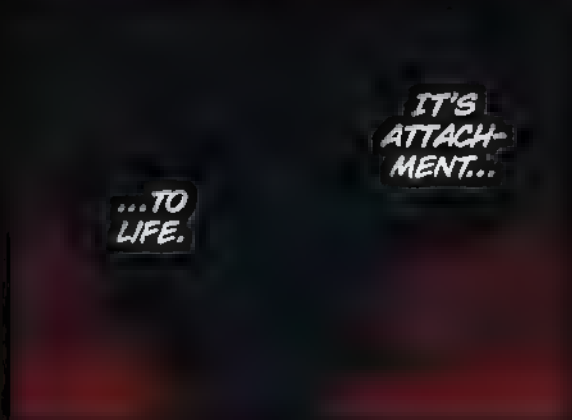


I'M
GETTING
THAT
SENSATION
AGAIN.

AHHH...

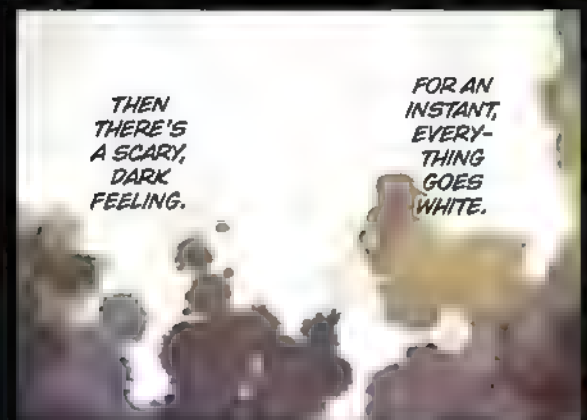
GOOD-
BYE...

...
KURO-
SAN.



...TO
LIFE.

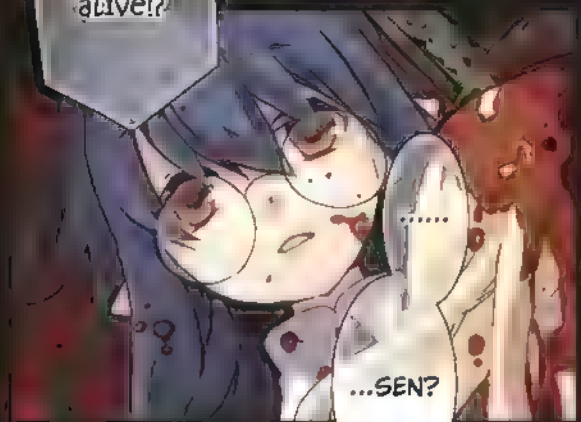
IT'S
ATTACH-
MENT...

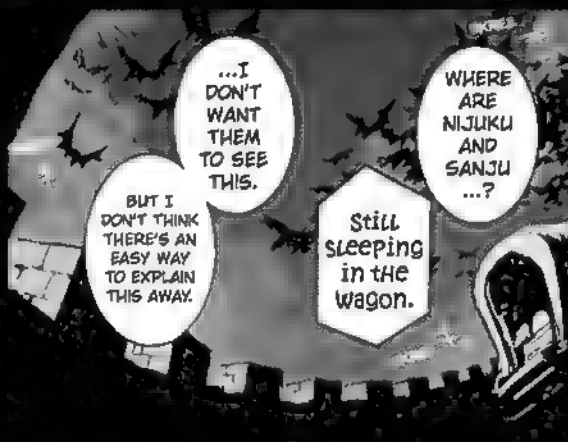


THEN
THERE'S
A SCARY,
DARK
FEELING.

FOR AN
INSTANT,
EVERY-
THING
GOES
WHITE.

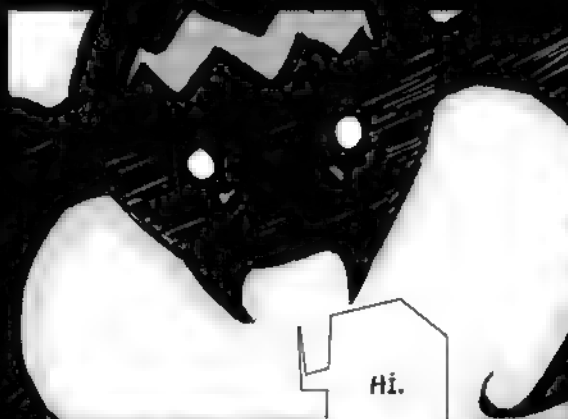
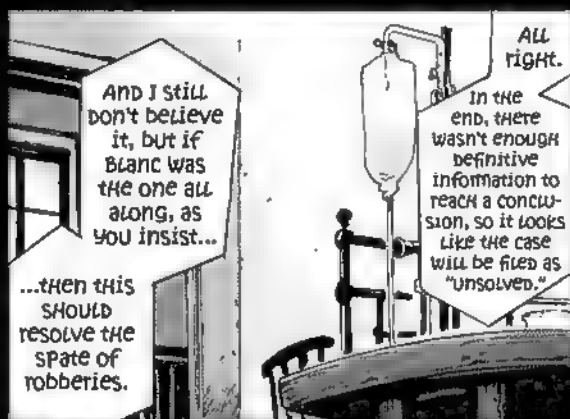


















...touching
on this
subject...

UP to
now...

...I've
been leery
about...



ABANDON
MYSELF AND
BECOME A
WITCH...

AS LONG
AS I CAN'T
FIND THE
"ANSWER"...

...THERE
ARE JUST
TWO
PATHS.

...OR LET IT
"END" AND
ACCOMPLISH
NOTHING.



...during's
Mo's last
moments?

...but
WHAT DID
YOU DO...



If "death"
isn't at the end
of the curse...

...what
is the
outcome?

ACTUALLY,
I FIGURED
OUT THE
ANSWER TO
THAT A LONG
TIME AGO.



EVER
SINCE...

...I
MET
MO.

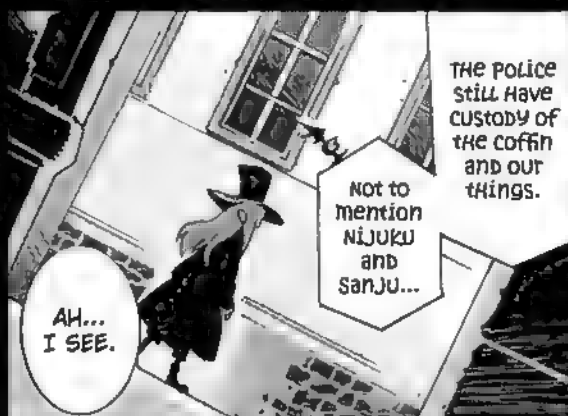


...I
USED
MAGIC.

OF
COURSE



SO
SINCE
THAT
DAY...









...AND IT BELONGED TO A KING, TWO OR THREE KINGS AGO.

IT'S FROM BACK WHEN THIS PLACE HAD A DIFFERENT NAME...

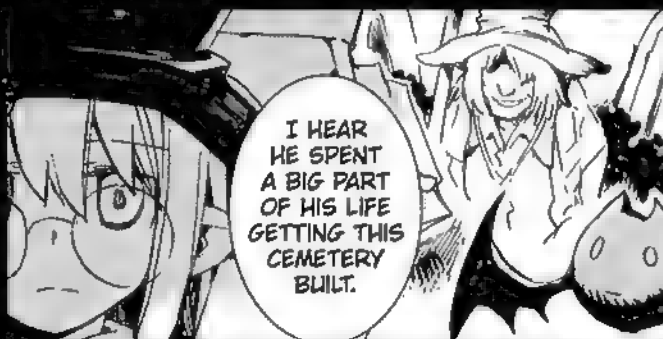
HUGE GRAVE-STONE, YEAH?



YOU'D FIGURE, RIGHT?

SO HE'S BURIED IN HERE?

BUT THE WORLD DOESN'T LET YOU GET YOUR GOODIES SO EASY.



I HEAR HE SPENT A BIG PART OF HIS LIFE GETTING THIS CEMETERY BUILT.



...AND CARTED OFF WITH ALL THE 'REST OF THE UNKNOWN CLANS.

THE 'KING' WAS KILLED DURING A CAMPAIGN...



...AND NOW IT'S JUST A HUGE SLAB OF ROCK ON ITS SIDE

EVEN A PROUD GRAVESTONE GETS TORN DOWN BY THE NEXT RULER...

EVEN WHEN YOU'RE ALIVE, MOST THINGS DON'T WORK OUT THE WAY YOU PLANNED.

WELL, EVEN IF HE HAD MADE IT SAFELY INTO A CASKET...

...THERE'S NO GUARANTEE HE'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REST IN PEACE FOREVER.



I JUST HOPE YOU GET "SHEATHED" IN...

...WHAT YOU GOT "PREPARED" THERE!



NOTHIN'.
NOTHIN'.

BUT, UH...



WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?



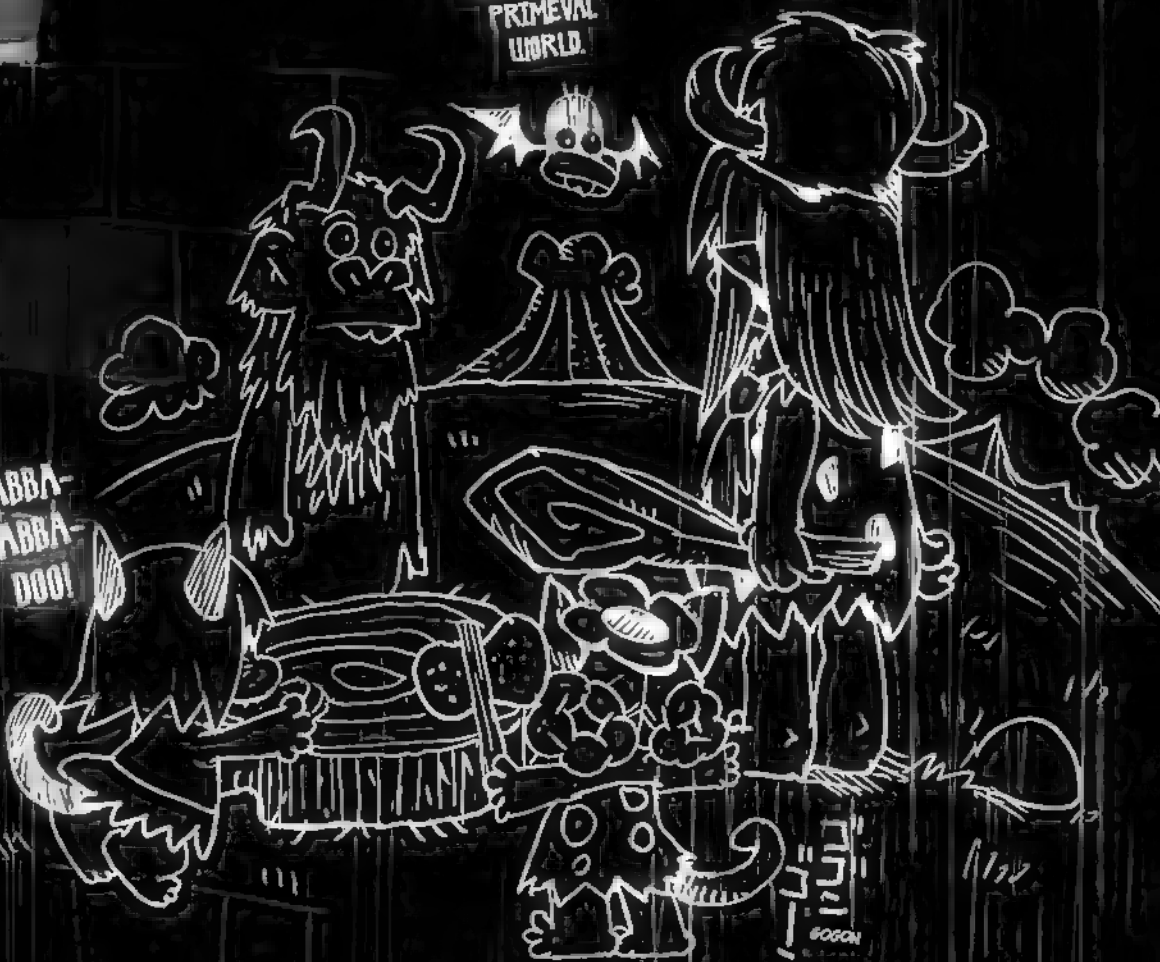
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR JOINING US FOR THE FIFTH
VOLUME OF SHOULDER-A-COFFIN KURO.

2015 SATOKO KIYODUKI

YOU CAN'T LET
YOUR GUARD
DOWN IN THIS
PRIMEVAL
WORLD.

IT SEEMS
WE'RE ALL
SEEING
DIFFERENT
KINDS OF
SCENERY

YABBA-
DABBA-
DOO!



“kuro”

U
S



YOU CAN'T LET
YOUR GUARD
DOWN IN THIS
PRIMEVAL
WORLD.

IT SEEMS
WE'RE ALL
SEEING
DIFFERENT
KINDS OF
SCENERY

YABBA-
DABBA-
DOO!

GOSON

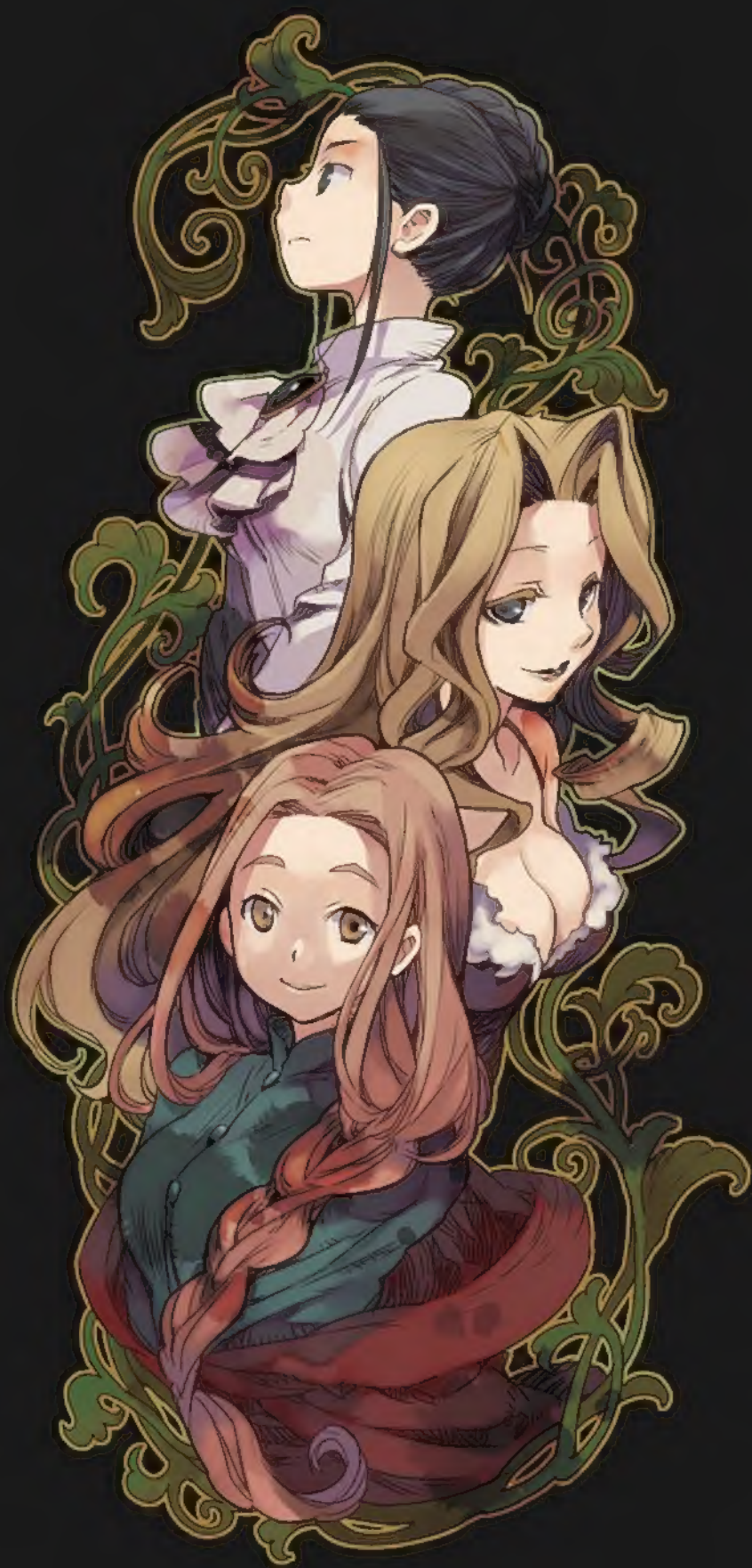
GON

"Shoulder a coffin."

U







SHOULDER-A-COFFIN KURO 5

SATOKO KIYUDUKI

Translation: Sheldon Drzka

Lettering: Lys Blakeslee

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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